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A notice this week's contents

## Coming to terms with the muzhik

John Keep

ROBERTA THOMPSON MANNING  
*The Crisis of the Old Order in Russia: Gentry and Government*  
555pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press. £41.  
0691053499

A photograph in this volume shows a Russian peasant family sitting down to supper on a summer evening circa 1900. The patriarch sports a fine white beard; the mother wears a kerchief tied around her head; and the four children are clearly enjoying their broth, ladled out from a common pot. Yet one of them has a mug and the garden fence is festooned with metal pots. To the keen-eyed social historian these details suggest progress of a kind: craft industries, growing contact with the towns, production for the market, and perhaps class stratification.

How fast was the Russian village changing under "capitalism", and to what effect? Much was written on such topics at the time by Populist and Marxist intellectuals; yet the Russian village kept its secrets hidden from most outsiders. In 1905-6 and again in 1917-18 the normally submissive muzhik rose up in fury. The driving force in both revolutions was the peasants' hunger for land. An almost mystical obsession with the soil impelled these men and women, some of whom were but a generation removed from serfdom, to expel all "non-owners" from the countryside, to seize their holdings and to carve them up among themselves. A similar fate lay in store for their livestock and other moveable goods: the buildings might be put to the torch. These were essentially archaic, spontaneous popular upheavals which owed little to agitation by radical intellectuals. The peasants preserved a healthy scepticism about the socialists' wordy schemes for nationalization or municipalization (Stalin's final solution, enforced collectivization, had not yet been thought of.) They saw the traditional family farm as the basic unit in the new galilean socio-economic order. In the early twentieth century Russian intellectuals, gentry and governments all faced the same problem: how to come to terms with this incalculable and potentially devastating primeval force.

Scholars have done much to clarify the issues, and sometimes to obscure

them. In the 1920s the distinguished American historian Gerold T. Robinson ploughed through reams of official papers and also toured the villages talking to peasants who had survived the cataclysm. Today the Soviet authorities would prohibit such direct contact by foreign researchers. But Roberta Thompson Manning has been able to examine holdings in the major Soviet archives, and she has tapped the published records of local

rather with two components of the Imperial establishment: the gentry and the government. We follow their fumbling efforts to devise appropriate agrarian strategies; we watch these partners drift apart under a surge of idealism and then come together again in the grip of a Russian-style grande peur.

Their relations were decided in two main institutional arenas: the zemstvo and then the Duma. The zemstvo was

harassed by officialdom at every turn, soon drifted into opposition.

They were in the main public-spirited landowners, rather self-important men who ruled their rustic bailiwicks in paternalistic fashion. But they were responsive to the needs of their employees, the so-called "third element" of teachers, doctors and other professionals; they absorbed Western liberal ideas; and by the 1890s they began to organize politically. The

Manning breaks new ground by analysing their social background. They were better educated, more cosmopolitan, and had left the state service to farm for profit. In the euphoric years 1902-5, as Nicholas II vacillated and then blundered into the disastrous war with Japan, zemstvo liberals made common cause with radical intellectuals and became spokesmen for the nation. The less cultivated landowners were dragged along behind, as if by inertia. This was an artificial situation and clearly could not last.

In 1905 the empire fell to pieces in the wake of military defeat in the Far East. The towns seethed with discontent. Strikes, protest marches and insurrections followed one another in bewildering succession. By October Nicholas II had to concede the principle of meaningful constitutional government. There was to be a Duma, or parliamentary body, elected indirectly like the zemstvo but on a broadened suffrage. For the next few months this prospect embodied the nation's hopes for reform and peaceful progress. The Constitutional Democrats, or Kadets, enjoyed great moral authority and when the Duma met for the first time in April 1906 their deputies controlled the house. There was even talk of a liberal ministry under the Kadet leader, Paul Milyukov. A historic compromise between state and "society" seemed imminent.

This proved to be a mirage. The reason usually given is the obstinacy shown by Milyukov, or the Tsar, or both. Manning pinpoints a deeper cause: the swing of grass-roots gentry opinion, which deprived the Kadets of their political base. The burnings and sackings of the "gentlefolk's nests" provoked a sharp reaction among zemstvo men. The conservatives reasserted themselves and many liberals moved to join them. They did not protest when the police arrested zemstvo employees, often on the flimsiest pretexts, or when "insolent" peasants were flogged and their villages destroyed by Cossack troops. Ivan Petrunkovich, the founding father of zemstvo liberalism, was one of the landlord victims of peasant violence. Bitter at the senseless ravaging of property, he declared that those guilty of "agrarian crimes" should be excluded from any amnesty granted by the Tsar. Many right-wingers went further than this. The Tula zemstvo cul



A meeting of village elders, 1910, from Russia in original photographs 1860-1920 by Marvin Lyons (212pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul, £6.95, 0 7100 9243 1).

agencies more thoroughly than anyone hitherto. Her book deserves to stand alongside Robinson's classic, *Rural Russia under the Old Regime*. Both works succeed in translating cold statistical data into human terms; both place social movements firmly in their overall political context - a rare virtue in these days of quantitative history. Manning has little to say about the revolutionaries. She is concerned

something of a hybrid. The local government reform of 1864 had set up provincial and county councils responsible to the central authorities for such matters as education, health, roads and agricultural improvement. But their members were elected, if only indirectly, and so in some measure represented rural "society" in its dealings with the absolutist state. The zemstvo men, starved of funds and

resolutions passed at their semi-legal gatherings were couched in deferential terminology; yet they reflected a worthy determination to resist arbitrary rule and to promote respect for popular rights. At a time when liberalism was in general decline elsewhere in Europe it blossomed belatedly in Russia; and the gentry, formerly the bulwark of autocracy, took the lead.

### Multi-Party Politics and the Constitution

VERNON BOGDANOR

Analyses the growth of multi-party politics in Britain, including the development of the Liberal-SDP Alliance, and considers the potential constitutional consequences of hung parliaments. Written in clear, non-technical language, this timely publication will be indispensable to anyone wishing to understand current trends in British politics. Hard covers £18.50 net. Paperback £9.95 net.

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# Children of the universe

Peter Redgrove

## RICHARD PERCEVAL GRAVES

*The Brothers Powys*  
370pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul.  
£14.95.  
0710093233

## C. A. COATES

*John Cowper Powys in Search of a Landscape*  
191pp. Macmillan. £20.  
0353324765

## LLEWELYN POWYS

*Black Laughter*  
222pp. Bristol: Redcliffe. £5.95.  
0 90549 54 7

The occult or magical life, the life lived according to "a reality behind the veil", the Romantic or symbolic life, gets an exceedingly bad press in the serious journals of our age. It is the positivistic spirit that has prevailed, which claims that the surface reality apparent to our conscious senses is all that matters, and that there are no "unconscious" senses at all, through which the unseen influences the seen. It has been difficult for scholars to accept that the magical view of life of so great a writer as W. B. Yeats was not just an aberration but his very core; and it is likely that the paganism of the brothers Powys has not helped them towards the wide acceptance which is their right. *Rats in the Sacristy* was the name Llewelyn Powys gave to his book of essays "about men whose thought was profoundly non-Christian".

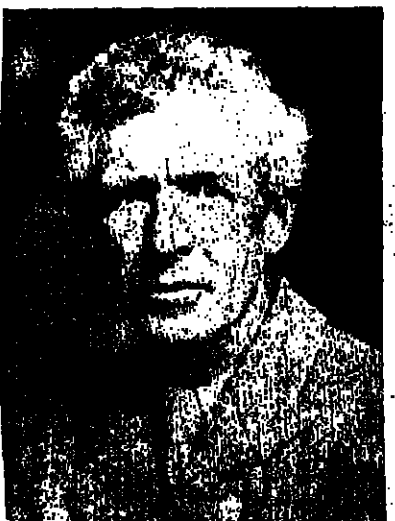
Though all John Cowper Powys's masterpieces (which I take to be *Wolf Solent*, *A Glastonbury Romance*, *Weymouth Sands* and *Maiden Castle*) are in print, and T. F. Powys's great *Mr Weston's Good Wine* is available, nothing else of the latter's is, except *Mr Tester's Gods* (in a large print edition, oddly enough). Llewelyn Powys's *Black Laughter*, a study, *Black Laughter*, has just been re-issued; *Ebony and Ivory*, also about Africa, is to be re-issued next year. Five of his other books are still in print. This is still comparative neglect. What a film Polanski would have made of *Maiden Castle* (instead of *Tasteless*!) Theodore's remarkable "black comedies" antedate those of Beckett or Pinter, and in my opinion are superior to them, having greater moral concern and deeper humour. As well as the three great brother-artists, there are two sisters of particular note: Gertrude, whose paintings must still be somewhere; and Katie, who was a world authority on lace, and whose beautiful account of early twentieth-century village life, *The Blackhorn Winter*, ought to be re-issued.

Richard Perceval Graves's *The Brothers Powys*, though it is a family biography, naturally emphasizes the three brothers of enduring reputation. It is a remarkable story of innocence and energy. I use the word "innocence" in contradistinction to "corruption" rather than "experience". After all, to those who believe in the magical world, every human being is a child of the universe, and an important part of it, while the positivists regard human consciousness as a kind of accident, or at most a function, of the brain. The magical world operates on two levels. The first is what one might call the "vertical correspondence" (as above, so below) which I have just mentioned, and the second, the "horizontal correspondence" which are much more familiar but seemingly more rare: just as to J. C. Powys the universe was a living organism, shot through with powerful and ambiguous, but still meaningful, personal energies, so all the eleven siblings lived in relationships of love and concern for each other and for those who came in contact with the family, in a manner that must be rare anywhere, let alone among literary or artistic people.

J. C. Powys was the eldest child of the Revd Charles Powys and Mary Cowper Johnson. He was sensitive and imaginative from the earliest age, and a ready target for the contradictory morality of his father's ascetic brand of Christianity, and thus a fully prepared candidate for conjectures and experiences beyond it. The child

protected himself, as such children often do, with magical fantasies and rituals. "I am the Lord of Hosts!" he once triumphantly announced to the astonished nursemaid who was pushing his baby brother Littleton in the pram: down the lane that led to his father's church.

The effect of one incident with his father persisted to the end of his days. John had been indulging "the most wicked pleasure known to me, of transferring tadpoles from the pond in the field to the puddles left by the rain at the side of the drive". Charles Powys was shocked by this brutality. The person took John, aged three, to where he had been chopping down some laurels, "moved by a natural desire that his son should behold these deeds of devastation and glory in his begetter's skill and strength". Then the father gave the son a present which he had carved himself from the laurel wood: it was an axe. In Graves's words, it was an axe. In Graves's words, it was an axe. In Graves's words, it was an axe.



Llewelyn Powys

own violence, and then had given him a weapon for further destruction. R. D. Laing might describe this as a schizo-phrenogenic act. It gave the child a feeling for the contradictions of cruelty in the world, and when in one of his books he saw a picture of an eagle seizing a lamb, "John became thrilled by a sadistic feeling. . . . Excited by these images, he developed 'the habit by night of making my little cot shake with the feverish intensity of my infantile eroticism'".

Childhood punishment "did not deter John from the fantasies he enjoyed each night, in which he was in control of a world which normally frightened him. . . . These acts of 'magical masturbation' remained essential to him all his life, and seemed part of his imaginative gift. At seventeen John was creating in *Porius* an adult version of the endless fairy tale with which his father had entertained him in his childhood, and the smell of the giants in the novel reminds *Porius* of the smell of the tadpoles . . . which he had carried to certain wayside puddles at the foot of the Gaer".

It appears that an interest in the byways of sex was essential to all the three, John most of all. He said "Nature puts her seal on what is best for each of us by the mystery of happiness that such things bring." It is as though conventional norms were in some way inimical to the creative consciousness of the magical universe, and conventional norms turn away from these ideas. Yet one can compare the descriptions of sexual relationships in, say, *A Glastonbury Romance* very favourably with those of a much more widely esteemed prophet of sex, D. H. Lawrence. In my opinion, J. C. Powys has the wider mind and truer senses and deeper sympathies with both sexes, and also knows how to use humour, which is rare in Lawrence.

All three of the brothers were intensely erotic (with Theodore it was a kind of love-death, and this went into his writing) and regarded sexuality as a means of revelation. All sensation was a starting-point for John: "Every flower is alive as we are," and was an entry into "magic, which was a mysticism of Nature. Llewelyn remarked: 'How continually one feels people say you make too much of sex.' It is the backbone of all life." And John in *Weymouth Sands* writes that one can "fumble and grope

towards the world's mystery through the more receptive souls of women". John believed in a golden age of an "anarchical matriarchy" and Llewelyn that "the poetry of nature might well include pages of detailed erotic fantasy". It is possible to imagine that these highly sexed siblings, and possibly the whole family of brothers and sisters, became as united as they were in a state of defence within the "enormous emotional and magnetic explosiveness, held rigidly under an almost military control" of their Reverend Father. Perhaps it was John wrote in *Owen Glendower*: "It is the romance of heroic and hopeless rebellion. . . . Such a rebellion is full of an occult significance".

However, Charles Powys's simple, unshakable religious opinions acted on, for example, Littleton, quite differently, and he became a headmaster, not an artist; Bertie became an architect. There was no trace of resentment on either side over these differing ways of life; between



Theodore Powys

the siblings all seem mutual love and esteem, right to the last. The mother, Mary, was "formidable too," and adapted to her husband's "sadistic" religion with an almost "masochistic" fit, and Llewelyn at least seemed to hate her. He described her as "that strange woman who ever loved sorrow rather than joy". When it was understood that he had consummation, "I knew she resented my going to Switzerland and would have had me instead return quietly to Montacute to die peacefully there clinging to the Christian hope." Yet when they were children she gathered them around her to read their Bible and other stories, and this seems to have been part of the magic too.

A sorrow in John's life was that he married a woman who in temperament seemed to resemble his mother; yet all his life, even in penury, he regarded housing and feeding her as one of his chief responsibilities. This was so too with other women he adored, such as

Frances Wilkinson. The three brothers shared an *annus mirabilis* (1921-22) when they each found the woman who was to encourage and influence their writing decisively. With John, this was Phyllis Playter, with whom he was to live for the rest of his life; Llewelyn in America fell in love with Alyse Gregory, also an author, who long survived him, but who in her eighty-fourth year lay down on his cloak to die after taking an overdose; and Theodore in England met Sylvia Townsend Warner, and this was a turning-point for him. Despite his loving and working partnership with Alyse Gregory, Llewelyn's relationships to women were extremely varied and almost continuous; he led a contradictory life of extreme ill-health and what an unsympathetic observer would call vigorous lechery.

It was the Powys brothers' eroticism again, and sexuality is another matter that gets a bad press; often in human relationships extreme eroticism is



John Cowper Powys

equated with cruelty. With none of them was this so; in this biography one can only find instances of care and concern in their relationships with women, though admittedly Llewelyn could have been more observant of Alyse's suffering behind her loving reassurances. In John's case one can imagine that this was because he had mastered his "sadistic images", and so did not need to practise cruelty, indeed by a beneficent magic he seemed to have turned these energies into love and personal magnetism. Llewelyn had this magnetism also, to the end; Ethel Mannin said when she visited him during his last illness, "I have never known such charm . . . charm that kindles the senses like sunlight."

I hope I have not suggested that Graves seeks a key to the brothers' achievement in life as in letters. It is a biography pure and simple, and a good one, with an eye for the significant story; a well-arranged book with a good index and useful summarizing

## Against Dullness

Clouds harbour no cuckoo-land,  
preferring that that wraps up night  
like an expected gift.  
The chair spins round: a dark unplanned  
by schizophrenics comes adrift  
and drifts down out of sleep.

I thought you were sitting there,  
your hair still dripping from the rain  
that lately caught you out.  
Tired, you slumped into the chair  
and shade and water burned a stain  
across the collar of your coat.

Water whispers, makes a dull  
provincial sense, and such things may  
depress us, being true.  
The darkness of the chair was all  
that kept the provinces at bay,  
half-hiding, half-displaying you.

Titillations we survive,  
and rain too, with its gifts of fur  
and darkness with its face.  
There's little we ourselves can give  
but that which loves both rain and fear  
and lives in any place.

George Szirtes

# Amleth, prince of Jutland

H. R. Ellis Davidson

William F. Hansen (Editor)  
*Saxo Grammaticus and the Life of Hamlet*  
202pp. University of Nebraska Press.  
£12.75.  
0 8032 2318 8

"One might have said he was Superogatory. Had he not mentioned the Hamlet Affair." So wrote James Michie of Saxo in a *New Statesman* verse competition. This book is concerned with the Hamlet Affair in Saxo's Latin History of Denmark, written in the early years of the thirteenth century, and so revives a subject somewhat neglected by scholars of recent years. It certainly deserves revival, for the tale of Hamlet's Danish predecessor Amleth is one to awaken curiosity in any lively mind. Saxo presents it as the story of a minor king in Jutland, and this is the earliest version of the plot of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Prince of Denmark. Here already we have the wicked uncle and the threatened nephew, playing the fool while seeking vengeance; here too is the girl by whom the hero is attracted, but whom he never marries, his ruthless murder of a spy, bitter reproaches to his faithless mother, a voyage intended to end in his death but which, he turns to his advantage, his return home to a funeral ceremony (although in Saxo this is Amleth's own), and the final

achievement of his revenge, in which many perish beside his uncle. Only the ghost and the travelling players are missing (and both may be found in other tales in Saxo's early books). The major difference is that vengeance in Saxo does not cost the hero his life, but wins him the kingdom, together with outstanding riches such as Saxo gives to no other hero.

We are tantalized by the question of whether Shakespeare ever read Saxo in the original, or made do with a summary or translation. The English version of Belleforest, often assumed to have been his source, did not appear until 1608, although he may have seen the French original. Some scholars, including Dover Wilson, thought they discerned echoes of Saxo's Latin in lines of Shakespeare: for instance Amleth's words to his mother: *Cetera silete memineris* might conceivably have suggested Hamlet's last words: "The rest is silence." There seems no conclusive answer to the problem, since the earlier play on Hamlet's revenge, performed in 1589, is lost. But it is certainly worth while to go beyond Belleforest's narrative to the brilliant, exciting tale in Saxo, which has a driving force setting it apart from other tales of vengeance against an usurping uncle in Icelandic literature, discussed by William F. Hansen. The trickster character of Amleth, and his subtle play on words - very popular in medieval Scandinavia and Iceland, and difficult for Saxo to get across in Latin - and his outwitting of a savage, sinister and rather stupid court, come across with convincing effect. Particularly powerful are his merciless actions,

cutting up the spy's body, boiling it, and sending it down a sewer as food for the pigs outside, and fastening down the king's drunken body-guard with lengths of tapestry before setting fire to the hall in his final act of vengeance. It is perhaps a little blurred in this new translation, precise but somewhat lifeless, with none of Saxo's touches of erratic brilliance. The rendering of Saxo's description of Amleth as a fool, like "an absurd monster due to a derangement of fate", for example, compares poorly with Elton's "some absurd abortion due to a mad fit of destiny", or Peter Fisher's "a ridiculous freak created by fate in a madcap mood". The continued use of the word "cruels" hardly conveys the idea of the small hooks of wood fashioned by Amleth early in the story, and later used to pin down the tapestries to the earthen floor.

However, the commentary and description will be useful to those engaged on this subject in the future, for it is one on which the last word has by no means been said. Some new links are pointed out, such as that between Shakespeare's *Fortinbras* and Saxo's Vigliok, and also it is argued that the story of Brutus, far from being the possible original of Saxo's tale, is more likely to derive from some early folk-tale from which the Danish story was also taken. There are references to detailed work in Danish unlikely to be familiar to English scholars, and an interesting note on the graves of Hamlet in Denmark, including one created at Elsinore in the nineteenth century as a trap for tourists. Much more might be said on Saxo's use of

popular tradition, not merely in his method of story-telling and arrangement of plot - something difficult to judge objectively - but in the constant use of riddles, word-play and puns. The folk-tale element in the early books of Saxo is something on which a good deal of work has been done; for instance, there is Kenneth Jackson's study of the Irish tale of Conall Corc, where a message is conveyed, as in the Amleth story, by means of a shield. The impression throughout is that this one particular tale of Amleth is viewed too much in isolation from the rest of Saxo's legends of early heroes, and from the wider background of Icelandic literature. From this viewpoint, there is nothing surprising about the comparison of a horse with a wolf, which Hansen seems to find perplexing, in one of Amleth's riddling replies. It is commonplace in Norse tradition to portray the wolf as the steed of the trollwoman or giantess, hastening to the battlefield to feast on the slain, an image possibly based on the savage valkyries of early Germanic tradition before they developed into dignified ladies in armour. Possible signs of myth in the Amleth story, suggest by a number of scholars, are not touched on here.

This is a useful though limited book on an important subject, particularly helpful in the discussion of the distribution of tales of the hero who plays the fool to save his life. But the reader must not be led into the assumption that it is only because of his treatment of the Hamlet Affair that Saxo is worth reading.

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## On the bright side

J. A. Burrow

Glending Olson  
*Literature as Recreation in the Later Middle Ages*  
245pp. Cornell University Press.  
£14.75.  
0 8014 1394 6

It is sometimes held that medieval thinking about literature concentrated exclusively on its didactic function, as if songs, stories and shows were then considered, officially at least, purely in terms of their moral, spiritual, or prudential utility. Glending Olson recalls, however, that Horace's discussion in the *Ars Poetica*, much quoted in the Middle Ages, recognized a kind of poetry which served only to delight (*delectare*), as well as the purely didactic sort and the other sort (best of all which combines both functions by "bleeding profit with pleasure"). Olson sets out to discover how the literature of delectation, and more generally the idea of literary pleasure itself, came to be considered in the Middle Ages - a period in which, admittedly, moralistic or at least pragmatic theories of literature prevailed. He states his purpose as follows: "I hope essentially to redress an imbalance in modern scholarship that fosters, intentionally or not, the notion that medieval literary thought had nothing but indifference to or contempt for the purely pleasurable."

Olson's phrase "the purely pleasurable" suggests the intriguing possibility that some medieval literary theory might actually be more Paterian than Platonic; but it turns out, disappointingly if not surprisingly, that his authorities all stress the practical utility of literary pleasure. Even the dulce, if not the utile, in two long, and interesting chapters, Olson relates this idea to "entertainment is good for you": general medieval thinking about the utility of pleasure. The first of these chapters ("The Hygienic Justification") shows that medieval writers appreciated the importance of "moderate cheerfulness" to the preservation or restoration of health, and that they occasionally mention listening to songs and light reading as activities able to foster such cheerfulness. One does not, for instance, find delightful stories that may expand the mind and move bodily substance, as participating, as Olson remarks,

modern holistic medicine. The following chapter ("The Recreational Justification") discusses the less technical idea of recreation as a necessary and proper part of life. One of the standard elementary textbooks of the time, Cato's *Disticha*, warned its schoolboy readers to have some fun occasionally - but only "so that you may the better bear whatever work you have to do". The doctrine that all work was commonly expressed in the example of the bow which loses its springy strength if it is kept continually strung.

The authorities cited by Olson in these chapters, medieval and otherwise, generally mention songs and stories simply as items in lists of salutary delights which also include such things as pleasant walks and fine clothes. They are not particularly concerned with "literature". Yet Olson shows that medieval songs and stories do draw on current ideas about hygiene and recreation to justify themselves. His demonstration would have been more comprehensive if he had not confined himself, as he largely does, to "non-didactic, principally entertaining material" such as the French fabliau and the Italian novella. "The increasingly substantial but not fully autonomous secular culture of the later Middle Ages" is what interests him. He therefore does no more than mention in passing the remarkable passage in *Piers Plowman* where Langland (ironically) justifies even that comprehensive improving work as simply a form of pleasure: *for recreation, as I have said, is the best of all things*. Cato's *distich* in the process, and Henryson's prologue to his *Fables*, which states the whole doctrine of literature as recreation in a nutshell, (lines 19-28), receives no mention at all.

Despite this regrettable self-denying ordinance, however, Olson is still left with a fair amount of material. Among the works he discusses are several French fabliaux, Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (where he fails, perhaps to his credit, to suggest that the tales form part of the regimen of a group of convalescents on their way to the shrine of a saint "that hem hath holpen when that they were seke"), and also *Aucassin et Nicolette*, whose author claims that "there is no one so perplexed, so grief-stricken, miserable, or beset with illness, who upon hearing it will not be improved in health and cheered up." But Olson's chief example is the *Decamerone* of Boccaccio. The prefatory epistle to the

humanist Laurent de Premierfait, while stressing the moral benefit to be gained from reading it, nevertheless also provides Olson with "a major statement of the recreational justification of literature".

Olson uses this contemporary testimony to good effect; but he also has a new idea of his own. The *Decamerone*, it will be recalled, opens with a vivid description of the plague in Florence, from which the young people escape to tell their tales in the country. Here and in some other works (notably Guillaume de Machaut's *Jugement du Roy de Navarre*) Olson sees a pattern of movement "from plague to pleasure" which he interprets in the light of contemporary plague tracts. These recommend cheerfulness as a preventative against the dreadful disease, and some specify songs and stories among the recommended means of attaining such cheerfulness. Olson accordingly suggests that the hundred stories of the *Decamerone* are

## Aulnage assessed

Brenda Bolton

NIGEL SAUL  
*The Bateford Companion to Medieval England*  
245pp. Bateford. £14.95.  
0 7134 1345 X

This Companion to Medieval England, although not a book to be read straight through, nevertheless provides a valuable insight to the period. Saul tells us at the outset that his professional interests are rooted in the political and social history of the later Middle Ages and this is apparent in the way the contents are tilted towards this period: the length of entries appears to vary in accordance with his enthusiasms. Nevertheless, Dr Saul has successfully covered many themes: art and architecture, government and literature, people and institutions and many legal, religious, and social matters. Technical definitions are suitably brief and many of the general themes are given the longer treatment they deserve. He has kept bibliographical references to a bare minimum and for the shorter entries has omitted them altogether. A

general bibliography on the main topics, giving a more certain lead to further reading, would have been useful. It must also be said that a more consistent approach to the level of the books recommended would have allowed the years of scholarly readers. In spite of these mild strictures this is a book which professional historians will find useful. It is not everyone who can explain to inquiring students the meaning of *assarting* or *aulnage* in two or three short paragraphs or claim to know the historical basis for such legendary figures as King Arthur, Robin Hood or Dick Whittington, or remember the details of the dietary habits of both rich and poor of the time.

The thirty-two illustrative photographs have been excellently chosen: to include both the south door of the nave of Kilpeck and the Bellfounders' window of York Minster shows an admirable understanding of the period. There are two appendices and three tables, and the occasional footnote does not interrupt the flow of the text. The eight maps or diagrams provided are both interesting and useful, as long as, as one is willing to tolerate the author's idiosyncratic choice.

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# Unreconciled to history

Cella Hawkesworth

DOBRIČA ĆOSIĆ

Reach to Eternity  
Translated by Muriel Heppell  
410pp, £8.95,  
0 15 175961 8

South to Destiny  
Translated by Muriel Heppell  
395pp, £11.95,  
0 15 184486 0  
Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Dobrica Ćosić is a controversial figure in Yugoslav public life. Born in 1921, he served with the Partisan forces as a political commissar during the Second World War. After the war, he became a member of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Serbia, but was expelled in 1968. He was accused then, as he has been on several occasions since, of expressing narrow Serbian nationalist views. In the uneasy community that makes up the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the tensions between a baffling array of nationalist interests are a constant threat to the country's stability. Ćosić has often maintained that he opposes bigoted nationalism, which he sees as an obstacle to genuine socialist progress. However, he can have had few illusions as to the way in which his words would be interpreted by his potential supporters and opponents alike. They earned him a considerable following and at the same time exposed him to attack on the grounds of nationalism – which can be used as a convenient label for an awkward independence of mind. Whatever the truth may be, Ćosić emerges from his many published essays and critical writings as a thinker and critic of great courage. After the death of President Tito in 1980 various attempts were made to increase democratic freedoms in Yugoslavia, including an appeal signed by many intellectuals. Ćosić among them, calling for an amnesty for all political prisoners and for the release of the main instigators of another proposal: to launch a new intellectual journal to be known as *Public Opinion* (*Javnost*).

Throughout Eastern and Central Europe, literature has often functioned as an alternative to official opposition. All of Ćosić's works reflect his vigorous acceptance of this tradition; essays or fiction, they constitute a meditation on the fate of his country and its people, its recent history and the forces shaping its present circumstances. In 1977, Ćosić was elected Member of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts. His inaugural speech became the subject of a new campaign against him; although the text of the speech was not published in Yugoslavia until some time later, as a result of pressure exerted by Ćosić on the Academy. Once again the attack was directed against the allegedly nationalist views expressed. The main concern of the speech, however, is with the relationship between literature and history, a theme which also dominates the collection of essays *Power and Foreboding* (*Moć i strepnje*), published in 1972 but immediately withdrawn from circulation. In his speech, Ćosić quotes Camus' perception of the inevitably tragic nature of art in critical moments of human history. Ćosić has the prominent status of a writer in the century, as driving people to a new concern with history, presented as an all-powerful force governing their lives in the place of a lost God. The role of literature at such a time is a vital one. By offering a poetic transposition of history, it can revitalize the spiritual life of the people.

Ćosić began to write works of fiction with this in mind. Most of these works have been concerned with the recent past of his native Serbia. Ćosić's first novel, *Far Away is the Sun* (*Daleko je sunce*, 1951), examines a decision-making among the Partisan leaders and their relations with the peasant population during the Second World War. One of the novel's striking features is its concern with the effects of division between people: the school-boys, but now fighting against each other. For all its weaknesses as a work of literature, this early novel, published in circumstances of considerable official constraint, clearly

demonstrates Ćosić's readiness to question accepted myth and dogma, and to confront the dilemmas of his time. This stance is still more clearly seen in a second novel about the Second World War, *Divisions* (*Deobe*, 1961). This is an attempt to analyse the mentality of the Chetniks (guerrillas who fought against the Partisans), to examine the complex reasons and emotions that drove them to turn their arms on their fellow Serbs. *Roots* (*Koreni*, 1954), focuses on the crucial years of Serbia's emergence from a patriarchal, agricultural province of the Ottoman Empire, its growth as an independent kingdom and first steps in parliamentary democracy. The novel is spoiled by a florid experimental style which tends to obscure the issues, but it does evoke a strong atmosphere of fear, suspicion and despair.

The next step in Ćosić's exploration of his country's recent past was his study of the First World War in Serbia, published in four volumes as *A Time of Death* (*Vreme smrti*, 1972-79), which takes up the set of characters introduced in *Roots*. The struggle of "little Serbia" against the Habsburg forces, vastly superior in terms both of men and equipment; its unexpected victories in the first year of the war; the way the small country held down a significant section of the enemy armies for a prolonged period; the appalling scale of the losses, not only in battle, but through disease; the devastation of the army and civilian population in the great retreat through the mountains of Montenegro and Albania in the winter of 1915, and the regrouping of the army to fight again with the Allies – all of this captured the imagination of governments and peoples alike.

For the English version the work has been slightly condensed into three

volumes, each dealing with a distinct phase of the war and forming a self-contained whole. The first, *A Time of Death*, focuses on one important battle in the winter of 1914. From its initial descriptions of misery and disarray this first volume rises to a dramatic crescendo as the Serbian army inflicts a temporary defeat on the Austro-Hungarian forces, obliging them to retreat from Serbian territory. The second volume concentrates on the lull following this victory, as the enemy forces regroup. Throughout this time, Serbia is ravaged by a typhus epidemic. *Reach to Eternity* is set in a Serbian hospital and describes the battle of its meagre staff to save the wounded and stamp out the disease. The determination of the hospital director against apparently hopeless odds echoes the pattern of battle in the first volume, where the figure of the general fulfils a parallel role of solitary persistence. The third volume, *South to Destiny*, describes the devastating new offensive by the combined Austro-Hungarian, German and Bulgarian armies, and the retreat of the remnant of the Serbian army and thousands of civilian refugees.

To develop his theme Ćosić draws on documents, official despatches, telegrams, newspaper articles, diaries and letters, merging the real and the fictional. The characters represent a similar blend. The central figures are the family of a fictitious leader of the Opposition. This focal point enables Ćosić to extend his material in two directions to cover the whole spectrum of Serbian society, from the government and army commanders to the life of the village and the fate of its population. The epic scale of the novel is inherent in the broad scope of its material, and in the nature of the

events it describes – the issues of life and death, freedom and survival confronting not only individuals, but an entire nation.

Ćosić's writing reflects a powerful intellect which thrives on debate and the conflict of ideas; his broad perspective enables him to enter into the circumstances and point of view of a great range of characters. And yet to some extent, his work remains on precisely this level: his characters tend to embody a situation or point of view rather than come to life as individuals. The novels are broad and detailed canvases, full of vigour and colour, but flat, with a uniform tone. This tone is curiously archaic in a late twentieth-century writer, leisurely, discursive, and, to readers in the Anglo-Saxon tradition at least, at times over-stated. Regrettably, the subject-matter of the novels also offers scope for Ćosić's tendency to bathos. The translator is faced with a difficult task, as the style does not transfer happily into English. For the British reader there is an additional obstacle as the text has been to a certain extent Americanized by the publisher, although this is not the natural medium of the translator.

Nevertheless, Ćosić's story is powerfully and movingly told, and like all his work is marked by a deep sense of moral responsibility and humanity. The following statement is typical of his standpoint: "A society which does not have a developed conscience, that is, an awareness of values and of injustice, a society which is not distressed by injustice and falsehood, is a society that has no need of freedom, or democracy or socialism. It is a society reconciled to the evil of life and history." Ćosić refuses to be reconciled.

by name, is almost certainly the victim of a probable Soviet plot, and a likely candidate for the next assassination by poisoned umbrella.

Narator, whose hold on reality is slight, counts Gogol's Akaki Akakievich among his ancestors; in the Soviet Union he worked as a clerk specializing in checking departmental documents for typing errors which he would correct with the aid of razor blades and erasers. He left the Soviet Union in order to get to meet the owners of disembodied voices he used to listen to on the radio, the voices emerging from a Russian language broadcasting station located in London. In due course he gets a job at the station in question, where life is not easy for him. Not only does he find it difficult to cope with the swing doors in the canteen, he also discovers that radio stations have no need of proof readers. Instead he tries to correct the pronunciation and accentual patterns of his colleagues who have been away long enough to make mistakes in their Russian. His attentions are unwelcome and he is threatened with dismissal.

This suffices to convince the White Russian lady that the KGB is mounting a plot to thwart his attempts to purify the Russian language; and that he is potentially a hero and eventual martyr.

He becomes something of a celebrity, and is even taken up by a lady journalist with a smattering of Russian, who tries to interview him on his own way in a man's world. Anyone unfamiliar with the species would think this character overdone but would be mistaken. She loses interest in him when she discovers that he has no guile, hard luck story to tell, and that no one seems to be after him. Then one morning, early on, Chelsea Embankment, someone scratches him with the point of an umbrella and soon after he dies, as the autopsy reveals, of natural causes.

The book blends conspiracy theory and high farce to interweave a whole pattern of differing perceptions and preconceptions of the "Russian language, of the Soviet Union, of English, and above all of London. There is a magnificent and hilarious conversation between two émigrés which is a telling and only slightly parodic evocation of different attitudes to the history of Russia in the twentieth century. The constant use of this kind of gentle exaggeration is an

invitation to seek for "the truth" by reading between these comical and slightly distorted lines. In other words the book constitutes what some would refer to as a text inviting deconstruction and the perception of sub-texts. English and Russian languages confront each other as London is seen through rather dim Soviet eyes and its place names are reformed into their Russian phonetic approximations, which are almost always obscene. At the same time the descriptions of London itself are beautiful. They are highly lyrical, while retaining the strangeness of an alien point of view. In this respect they are very like Nabokov's descriptions of Berlin in *The Gift*.

The book also makes farcical use of differences between Russian and English syntax, as Narator wrestles hopelessly with a new tense, the future in the past, to his utter mystification. He also has to wrestle with the little miseries of English life: gas meters, the learning of electric plugs, London houses that consist of nothing but stairs, and the shattering cold and damp of English homes in winter. Any foreigner who has had that experience will sympathize with Narator when he asks an Englishman how to get warm in winter and is told to "go outside".

The novel is also in a modest way a *Bildungsroman*, demonstrating the need to accept the reality of exile and to try to live it through. In this case, the unreal patterns of conspiracy and would-be heroics. The actual nature of Narator's end remains a satisfactorily open question, but the true conclusion of the book is best rendered by the words of Madame Epaphrodite at the end of *The Idiot*: "And all this, all this abroad, this Europe of yours is nothing but a fantasy, and we, abroad, are all just a fantasy too, remember, mark my words, you'll see."

Fantasy or not, with this book Zinovii Zink has shown himself to be an author of considerable talent; a stylist with a subtle sense of humour and the ability to make full use of the here-and-now of emigration. This ability to get beyond the mere recollection of Soviet things past suggests that he will do great credit to Russian émigré literature and will perhaps be mentioned in the same breath as Zinovii Volnovich – and the incomparable Aleshkovsky.

## Stopping the clock

George Mikes

SYMÓN SZECZTER

A Stolen Biography  
Translated by Frances Carroll and Nina Karsov  
157pp, Nina Karsov, 28 Lancelot Avenue, London NW9,  
0 907652 05 0

This is a strange book: social satirical Communist country with a generous dose of fable and fairytale added. Bitterness is mixed with a shrug of the shoulders – well, that's what humans are like: cowardly, naïve, selfish but there is perhaps – perhaps – a bit of good in us too.

The story takes place in an unnamed Communist country, obviously Poland, the author's country of origin. The three heroes, or anti-heroes, are little Jozek, big Josef and the Chick. Little Jozek is simply big Josef as a child; big Josef is little Jozek grown up. They are sometimes opposed, sometimes happily agreeing, but they do not really know each other. It is not quite sure why. The child, of course, cannot know the adult but the grown-up must know love or hate but alas he cannot remember the child. Anna, the child is little Jozek's friend, a friend of an antisemitic who finds out that he is Jewish. He develops into Josef Potoczek, a reasonably well-known and reasonably honest writer. The third main protagonist, the Chick, is a Party hack, always ready to swallow any insult or ready to betray anyone some small (or large) advantage.

The story – which is the last important part of the book – how around a manuscript, a biography, hidden first in a clock, then in a wall dog's kennel. The clock is stopped because Time itself has to stop. Zina and occasionally slightly confused (but confusing) episodes follow in great succession. Jozek, quite unexpectedly, becomes Secretary of the Water Union. The formerly despised naïf suddenly becomes a man of consequence and power. The Chick, who hoped to destroy him before the election, becomes his seemingly loyal deputy.

Zionism and the Jewish question figure in the story a great deal. Little Jozek is amazed: "Ever since I found out that I am a Jew, everyone has reproached me for it. Slowly but surely driven to the conclusion that Poland has remained as antisemitic as the Nazis used to be, minus the extermination camps. Now, however, instead of saying 'Jew' we must use the word 'Zionist'. A Jew has even to apologize for having been arrested as a Ukrainian nationalist and not a Zionist. He had no right to be a true patriot."

In the end the hidden manuscript is discovered and Jozek has to face a disciplinary Party Committee. The Chick apologizes for being about to betray him but finds that he has no chance of doing so: he too is expelled from the Party with Potoczek.

The two succeed in reaching home (where some old acquaintances are waiting for them). There they find the Israeli press is almost as biased, self-centred and bigoted as the Polish one. But Jozek comes to a new conclusion: "No passport can make you free, Freedom must be achieved after a struggle."

Reading Szechter's book is a little like a struggle here and there, but it is worthwhile. His is an original and unusual novel, the work of a writer and a gentle man.

Klaus Mann's novel *Mephisto*, which was the original for the book, was a successful film, has now been published by Penguin (263pp, £2.95). The translation by Robin Smythe, published in 1977, marked the book's appearance in English of the novel which was written by Thomas Mann in 1936 and gives a "thinly veiled" portrait of the actor, the "brother-in-law" of the actor, "Gandeggers" *Mephisto* was originally published in Amsterdam and provoked the longest lawsuit in the history of German publishing, which was banned for many years.

## Orderers of our environment

Roger Scruton

ANDREW SAINT

The Image of the Architect  
180pp, Yale University Press, £9.95,  
0 300 03013 4

Andrew Saint is surely right to think that there is an important study to be made of the public and private image of the architect in our own and previous ages. I do not believe, however, that he has quite succeeded in writing it. His book consists of anecdotal glimpses of architects and movements, supported by documents and photographs, with little connecting thread, so far as I could see, and with no major historical or critical thesis. The introduction fleetingly represents the work as an exercise in the Marxian theory of history – with the well-worn quotation from the *Preface to A Contribution to a Critique of Political Economy* – but in the event his turns out to be no more than a posture, which causes Mr Saint to assume that Ruskin learned to grasp political problems "more maturely" by seeing them in terms of "the relation of opposing classes". It is surprising therefore to find his social conscience at such a low ebb during his discussion of recent architecture. Nowhere does Saint seem to recognize that, as the image of the architect has

lasting worth, Vitruvius' own architecture has disappeared, and his name would not be known to the architect of the Beaux-Arts. Saint knows very well that most architecture is far less the record of an artistic idea than of ordinary practical understanding (or misunderstanding). Thus when he turns his attention to the twentieth-century architect his gaze must perforce sink well below the level of artistic ideas, so low indeed as to light on such vandals as Poulson ("architect" of Newcastle's destruction) and Lewis Womersley, city architect of Sheffield. It could be said, however, that Womersley's photograph, in front of the appalling Park Hill Estate ("his grandest creation" according to Saint), testifies in a way to the effects of "architectural individualism".

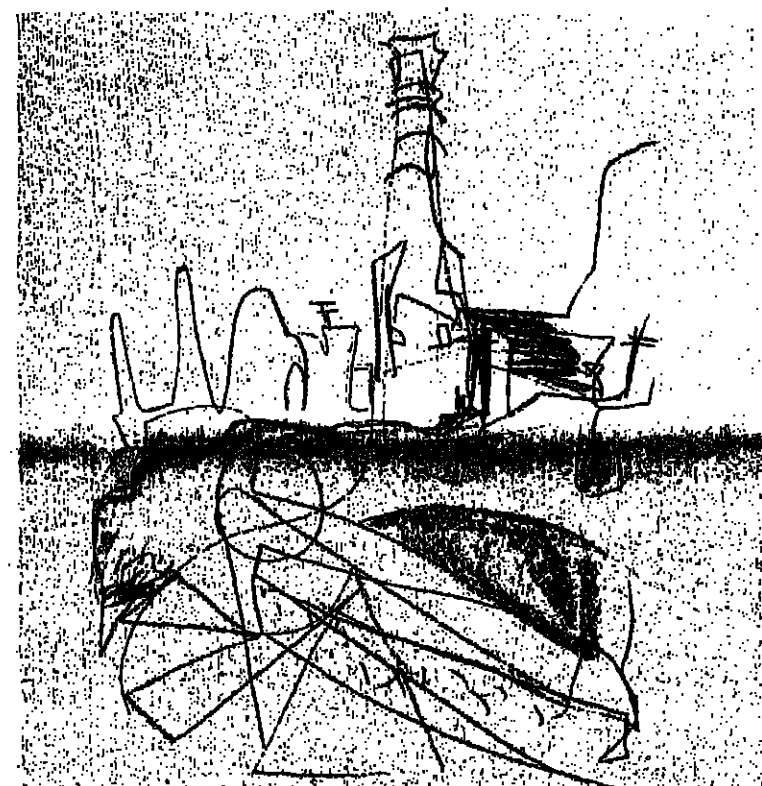
Saint writes from a vaguely socialist perspective: at least I assume that this is so, from his occasional reference to Marx, from his insistence on referring to the English middle class as the "bourgeoisie", and from his assumption that Ruskin learned to grasp political problems "more maturely" by seeing them in terms of "the relation of opposing classes". It is surprising therefore to find his social conscience at such a low ebb during his discussion of recent architecture. Nowhere does Saint seem to recognize that, as the image of the architect has

Saint's underlying assumption is also right, that the image of the architect has changed during the last century. He criticizes Pugin, Ruskin and Morris for their view that the anonymity of the medieval architect is the sign of an architecture conceived entirely in collective terms. The criticism is familiar, and correct, so far as it goes. However, I do not think that Saint should go on to suggest the opposite view, that "down the centuries one strain of architectural ideology has been heard much louder than others: the strain of architectural individualism, which ascribes both merit in particular buildings and general progress in architecture... to a personal conception, usually of style...". Saint attributes such a view (on no evidence) to Plato, and to the ancients generally. I doubt that the attribution is correct; but in any case the view is surely indefensible.

Of course we do occasionally discover the names of architects in classical literature; but the examples concern famous monuments and temples, and therefore only the smallest proportion of architectural practice. It is significant that in the major surviving textbooks of classical architecture that of Vitruvius – building is written about as though a "personal conception" were the least significant part of it, and common discipline of far greater and more

grown larger, so has his effect grown more destructive. Moreover, it is arguable that the Beaux-Arts American Institute of Architects – whose emergence is described in Saint's most interesting pages – was not a form of individualism at all. It was, rather, an attempt to subject modern building to the Vitruvian discipline which makes architecture acceptable to the people who actually have to live with it. There was no "personal conception" behind Pennsylvania Railroad Station – simply a desire to do the right thing, using models that had proved their visual merit. The result was one of the best-loved buildings in New York, whose destruction in 1962 was a crime comparable to the destruction of Newcastle, or the building of the Barbican.

Of course architects are individuals: only an individual could have organized the Angel Choir of Lincoln Cathedral, just as it required an individual to design my bathroom. But an individual is not necessarily an individualist. The largely faultless domestic architecture of eighteenth-century England shows that, so long as architects are treated as tradesmen and servants, whose main duty is to please their betters, they can act in a fundamentally decent manner, and so achieve their highest goal, which is anonymity. In that, at least, Ruskin



"Levant Mine ruins", 1963, by Peter Lanyon, reproduced from Cornwall, which contains thirty-three drawings by Lanyon and thirty-five photographs by his son Andrew (80pp, Allison Hodge, Boswall Farmhouse, Newmill, Penzance, Cornwall, £8.75, 0 906720 06 0).

## First among Finns

J. M. Richards

MALCOLM QUANTRILL

Alvar Aalto: A critical study  
307pp, Secker and Warburg, £23,  
0 436 39400 6

The Finnish master Alvar Aalto has altogether escaped the opprobrium recently heaped on the Modern Movement in architecture in spite of being one of its outstanding figures and a founding member of the *Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne*. The reasons are evident; Aalto was essentially a humanist, he was never doctrinaire, he used materials with an understanding of their inherent nature; and he always sought a sympathetic relationship between a building and its setting. Frank Lloyd Wright, with whose work Aalto has something in common, was despised – and claimed to practise – "organic" architecture. If anyone of the generation after Wright can be said to have practised it also, it was Alvar Aalto.

For all these reasons much has been published about him since his death in

1976, notably by his life-long friend and biographer Göran Schildt, many of whose writings have been translated into English, and by the American professor and critic Paul David Pearson whose *Alvar Aalto and the Finnish Tradition* (1972) has been a prolonged research in Finland, gives a particularly acute and well-balanced account of Aalto's architecture, especially during his formative years. Yet another study of Aalto's work ought therefore to justify itself by furnishing new material or new insights. It cannot be said that Malcolm Quantrill's book does either, but it will nevertheless be useful in providing a chronological description of Aalto's buildings and projects in which the influences, internal and external, to which they were subject are informatively analysed.

Quantrill is concerned with the work rather than with the man, except in one rather unnecessary passage in which for no apparent reason he introduces the topic of what he calls Aalto's "drinking habits". Most Finns drink, and Aalto did not allow his fondness for drink – or any other personal idiosyncrasies – to diminish his dedication to architecture. Only once, to the concern of his friends, did he

show any irresolution of this kind; that was during the months following his first wife Aino's early death from cancer in 1949, for she was not only his devoted companion, but also his professional partner. Quantrill cannot help but dwell on this, for it is his extraordinary pronouncement that Aalto's "successor as the leading figure in Finnish architecture since the mid-60s" is Reima Pietilä. Pietilä is an architect of undeniable earnestness but variable talent with echoes of Aalto discernible in some of the buildings, but Finnish architects would certainly not place him on the level Quantrill justifies to do – it would be rather like conferring the mantle of Sir Edwin Lutyens on the late Sir Basil Spence.

In spite of these and some other shortcomings, and in spite of its high price, Quantrill's book will be useful to anyone who wishes to refer to the sequence of buildings, and especially the successive changes of direction, that marked Aalto's long career. It includes a comprehensive bibliography embracing magazine articles, and exhibition catalogues as well as books, and an adequate index, which, however, is made tedious to use by so many of the pages being unnumbered.

and Morris were right. They were wrong only in believing that the Gothic style is the exception to what is in fact the single most important architectural rule: hide yourself.

In a way Saint must be taken to sympathize with those observations. Thus he argues for a "smaller architectural profession... in which 'sound building' is valued above 'high art'". But his conception of this involves so many concessions to the bureaucratic, and the large-scale planner, and makes so little attempt to explore the aesthetic foundations of an ideal anonymity, that it can hardly be taken as a criticism of recent architectural practice. This defective critical stance would have mattered less had Saint tried to present a complete and coherent historical picture of the recent "image of the architect". But his historical treatment is in various ways defective. It is good that he attends so warmly to Sir Clough Williams-Ellis; but why overlook Lutyens?

There is interesting historical material on the Bauhaus, but little on the Russian constructivists and little on CIAM. Propagandists like Giedion go unmentioned, and – most significant of all – Le Corbusier is hardly considered. But surely it was Le Corbusier who did most to create the twentieth-century image of the architect, as bully, demagogue and social reformer. Le Corbusier's half-baked theories dominated architectural "education" for more than thirty years, and his few, barely habitable, buildings remain places of pilgrimage for all aspiring practitioners of his craft. It was Le Corbusier who provided the major justifications for the modern housing estate and its horrors, and it was he who showed architects how the inability to draw, to think, to feel and to see could be masked behind a deft self-advertising rhetoric, which places words before things. It was thus that the image of the modern architect was formed, as an "artistic individual", one who does not obey but commands, who does not learn but teaches, who does not alter and adjust but who destroys – and rebuilds – anew. It was a characteristically presciently of Evelyn Waugh to satirize this character in *Decline and Fall*, published over sixty years ago. But it is a testimony to the effectiveness of propaganda, that someone as scholarly and intelligent as Saint should underestimate this character's immense historical significance.

I have dwelt on what I take to be the major defects of Saint's book, partly because I have the greatest respect for the author's enterprise, and indeed welcome his book as the first attempt to explore a subject that is of the utmost concern to the student of contemporary architecture. If the book is deficient in ideas this is perhaps because Saint is reporting a similar deficiency in those whom he describes.

The purest of all Finland's neo-classical churches, that at Hämeenlinna, by Louis Desprez, was built earlier still, in 1798.

This architectural judgement, also, is not always to be relied on; for example his extraordinary pronouncement that Aalto's "successor as the leading figure in Finnish architecture since the mid-60s" is Reima Pietilä. Pietilä is an architect of undeniable earnestness but variable talent with echoes of Aalto discernible in some of the buildings, but Finnish architects would certainly not place him on the level Quantrill justifies to do – it would be rather like conferring the mantle of Sir Edwin Lutyens on the late Sir Basil Spence.

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## HARVARD University Press

126 Buckingham Palace Road, London SW1



## Schooled in disputation

Robert Skidelsky

A. J. P. TAYLOR  
A Personal History  
278pp. Hamish Hamilton. £9.95.  
0 241 10972 8

A. J. P. Taylor's present wife, Eva, once said to me, "The thing you must remember about Alan is that he is a very evasive person". His autobiography bears this out, though not in an obvious way. Apparently many passages had to be omitted because they were deemed libellous. His second wife, Tony Crosland's sister, is not mentioned at all, at her request. Some of what remains is embarrassingly frank. Do we need to know that his father scraped worms out of young Alan's anus? He reveals that he never shared a double bed till he was seventy; that when he first slept with his first wife "nothing was achieved as often happened with me". Frankness of this kind is deceptive: Taylor remains as intellectually elusive as ever, impossible to pin down, full of decoys and red herrings. Perhaps it was a technique he picked up at his Quaker disputations at Bootham School, to draw attention away from painful areas.

This is not to say that the result is dull. Taylor cannot write a dull sentence. The narrative moves with his accustomed pace; there are many funny stories; there are affectionate portraits, mainly from his early life. But I doubt if the book will make him many new admirers, and it will disturb and sadden existing ones. He emerges as a lonely, somewhat bitter man, vain, perverse and paradoxical, unable, as time went on, to make or keep friends, disappointed in most of his professional relations. What kept him going was his work, his children — whom he adores and writes about proudly — his sense of duty, his architectural and musical tastes. At the age of seventy he found an "almost perfect" third wife, who one hopes has brought him the happiness which eluded him earlier.

Much of the ground is already familiar, but there are some new facts. One had not realized how rich the Taylor family was. His grandfather,

James Taylor, a Lancashire cotton merchant, left £250,000. His father never made less than £5,000 a year in the family firm — well over £50,000 in today's values. (At that time workers were getting £100 a year.) Taylor was educated at good private schools. Cynics will say: how can a man born with such a big silver spoon in his mouth go on talking about being "sprung from the working class and being a man of the people"? Yet the feeling seems to have been perfectly genuine. No doubt it has something to do with the more egalitarian, democratic spirit of the North of England. Both in his *English History 1914-1945* and in his popular journalism Taylor expressed and celebrated the values of the common man. Somewhere in this book he says he never bothered to republish his articles written for the *Daily Express*, *Sunday Pictorial* and such-like because they were too ephemeral. I suspect they came more from the heart than anything else he has written.

What emerges from his autobiography is how much an outsider Taylor was in the society of the southern, academic, middle class. In thirty-eight years at Oxford, he says, he never made a single close friend. (Such friends as he did make in later life, for example Lord Beaverbrook, were outsiders like himself.) In fact, the sections dealing with Oxford are disturbing and depressing. Oxford certainly does not emerge with credit, but neither does Taylor. He feels he was treated shabbily, and so he was. He was far and away the best modern historian there. He should have been offered the Regius Professorship (he says he would have turned it down); it was mean of the History Faculty to terminate his special lectureship in international history. Academics are a "craven lot", as he says. The trouble is, there is too much vanity in his raptures. "I am the most distinguished and by far the best known of the lot", he says of the eleven people who got first in history at Oxford in 1927. It is perfectly true; it would still have been better left to others to say it. He was never a professor "except by popular acclaim". He talks of the flattering academic offers he did receive and turned down. We hear a great deal about his spellbinding performances as lecturer and CND orator. It is always that way. When people are cheated of their

dearest ambition, no amount of success in other areas takes away the bitterness.

By contrast, Taylor talks about his historical work with insight and detachment. "All my books are old-fashioned textbooks of political history, enlivened by bright remarks." This is true; but it should be added that the bright remarks really are bright. He has an intuitive feel for what is important. Time and again, in some aside, he twists round one's whole way of seeing something. I can't think of any historian who has been able to do this so elegantly and economically. Yet even about history Taylor says something silly. The historian, he writes, should aim to be as popular as the novelist. I doubt if *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe* has displaced *The Carpetbaggers* from the suburban housewife's bookshelf. The reason is that Taylor is too clever; and it is perverse to imagine that cleverness can be other than a strenuous pleasure. This is not to deny that he has made history fun for a lot of people who would otherwise have been turned off it completely — not least by his lectures on television. But he would be as

incapable of writing the equivalent of Richard Attenborough's *Gandhi*, which is pure soap-opera, as he would of displaying the credulity of Lord Dacre. He knows what history is about.

Taylor's judgments are never less than forthright; they are also very much hit and miss. The Soviet occupation of Eastern Europe, even the use of Soviet tanks to put down uprisings in Hungary and Czechoslovakia, never gave him any qualms, he says, because Soviet rule was preferable to what these countries had had between the wars. Even if this is true — and it is not true of the Czechs — it is beside the point. The Austrians had a foul régime in the 1930s, too; but without the Soviet presence they have developed a robust form of social democracy. The choice, as Taylor must know, is not between a Horthy and a Kadar, but between Kadar and what would have come about under free conditions in the post-war world, when Fascism was completely discredited.

Taylor's softness towards Communism (as long as it is kept well away from England) is worrying, since he claims never to have had any

illusions about it. Yet justification of Stalinism without illusions is more repellent than justification of it with illusions. Taylor seems to believe that a murderous dictatorship and the Red Army were necessary to get rid of landlords and capitalists in Russia and Eastern Europe. Perhaps they were. Most people would say the price was not worth paying. There is a set of attitudes here I do not claim to understand. Perhaps one would have had to live through the inter-war years to make sense of them. There also seem to be certain kinds of Nonconformist (one thinks of E. H. Carr as well) for whom power and success come to be substitutes for God and morals.

In his introduction, Taylor praises his publishers of forty years, Hamish Hamilton. It is a shame they could not have done a better job on his autobiography. The paper is terrible, there are too many lines to a page, there are dozens of misprints, one of them even being a chapter heading, and the print of the index is microscopic. Such a dazzling career in history and letters should not have been allowed to end on this note.

## Working methods

Phyllis Willmott

JOHN BIRCH THOMAS  
Shop Boy: An Autobiography  
181pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul.  
£6.95.  
0 7100 9347 0

DAVID DOUGLASS and JOEL KRIEGER  
A Miner's Life  
118pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul.  
£4.50.  
0 7100 9473 6

A hundred years and strikingly different values and attitudes separate these two accounts of working lives. One is the story, recollected in the tranquility of retirement, of the life of a shop-boy in Victorian times; the other a semi-biographical and angry account of coalmining today.

Born in Peckham in 1860, John Birch Thomas had to wait until his seventies before writing down his memories of childhood and youth. He lived on into his nineties so that he must have completed and set aside this record of his first twenty-five years long before his death in 1952. The handwritten and laboriously worked-out account that he left behind was, fortunately, preserved. His grandchildren eventually and rightly concluded that it was worth publishing. One of them, a granddaughter whose academic field is that of nineteenth-century studies, prepared the manuscript for publication. In a brief preface she makes clear that she has done little editing; the style that marks the book — and the voice that so distinctively comes from it — is that of John Birch Thomas alone.

As his granddaughter recalls, it is a voice she and her family knew well. On their visits to him in the 1930s Thomas regularly entertained his grandchildren and other members of the family by those anecdotes of his early life that he was then in the process of writing down. He comes over in the book, as he must have done in life, as a resilient and somewhat self-satisfied character who achieved his ambitions by a combination of hard work, shrewd common sense and a will to learn by experience. These qualities were applied with the same determination when he turned his hand in his old age to writing what he describes as "a true account of actual happenings — a tale of memories crudely told".

The style of the book is, in fact, contrived and amateurish rather than crude. The tone is sometimes heavily humorous as if, indeed, he wrote with children or at most very unsophisticated adults in mind as his readers. At times, however, he does try to introduce a literary trick or two, influenced one suspects by his reading of Dickens. It is an "adventure story", all sparks and crackles, and easy — if sometimes a little irritating — to read. But it has real value as a social history. It is not only a record of the working conditions in shops in Victorian times — an area not much covered by social historians — but also the minute details of ordinary daily life of the period.

Through Thomas's "tale of memories" we meet a world in which a bed-time cup of cocoa offered by an amiable young landlady to her boy lodger was seen as the greatest of treats. We are taken back to a time when high-buttoned boots were in fashion, shop-boys delivered goods by handcart, and trams from central London to Peckham were drawn by mules. In the 1870s, by the author's account, Peckham was a most respectable and desirable suburb within which Peckham Rye was a centre of "select" shops and high-class merchandise.

The only child of failed shopowners who were also singularly half-hearted parents, Thomas seems to have left

them for good, and with no regrets on either side, when he came back to London from Swansea. (His parents had moved there after their business collapsed.) He had started work at the age of eleven so that by the time he returned to London alone, at fourteen, he already had varied experience of shop work in Swansea. By the age of twenty-five, when the book ends, he had worked in many different types of shop. He describes working conditions, employers and customers, and the kinds of shops he worked in — a china shop in Swansea, a toy shop in Peckham Rye, a grocery store in Bethnal Green among others. His working days were long (in Bethnal Green he had to work until midnight on Saturdays, before going up to sleep in the bedroom he shared with seven other assistants.) His wages at first were barely sufficient to provide him with food and clothing. On Sundays, the only day off, he wandered about London, on his own but not unhappy. He had learnt early that self-reliance and calculated self-interest were his best hope of "getting on": every one he made from one shop to another was with the conscious intent to better himself in terms of experience and wages. At the same time, he was by no means a tough or unfeeling lad and, considering his affectionless childhood, probably owed his eventual success in business and marriage as much to an innate good nature and decency as to other qualities.

It is certain that conditions of work for the majority of "shop boys" have changed a great deal since John Birch Thomas's time. This must also be true in some ways for the majority of miners. But it remains a hazardous and unhealthy occupation in which for many, according to the authors of *A Miner's Life*, conditions remain "little different from the nineteenth century". Even improvements, such as modern machinery is supposed to have made, have brought with them new hazards.

There is no single, unmistakable voice speaking in *A Miner's Life* but an amalgam of several. Paradoxically, the "underground" voice is that of an American academic, Joel Krieger, whose research interest is the British coal industry. The "surface" — or more obviously identifiable — voices belong to David Douglas, who sometimes speaks as "coalface worker", which was for some fifteen years, and sometimes as "militant union official", which he has now become.

It is "the militant union official" who, one might conclude after reading this book, makes the most sensible comment (although not the most vivid) — these "come from the 'coalface workers'": that "we should struggle to isolate the numbers of people below ground to fewer and fewer, by lowering the age of retirement and raising the age of entry". Unfortunately, as the same voice adds later, when it is by no means universally desired.

## Viewpoint: analysis and the autobiographer

Charles Rycroft

In the early, heroic days of psychoanalysis, it would not, I imagine, have been difficult to find an analyst prepared to propound with confidence the psychoanalytical theory of autobiography. In a paper entitled, perhaps, "The Psychopathology of Autobiography" or "The Autobiographer as Narcissist and Exhibitionist", the infantile fixation points and the unconscious perverse fantasies of the autobiographer would have been located and defined, and autobiographers added to the list of those who, like children, savages, neurotics, lunatics and artists were impelled by the primitive, primary processes of their Id.

But such a reductionist approach would be inconceivable today, and modern analysts are, I think, more likely to be impressed by the number of daunting problems about consciousness, self-consciousness, identity and memory that are raised by autobiographies, than by the fact that particular autobiographies may provide evidence confirming, or perhaps even disconfirming, particular psychoanalytical theories about human development.

The *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* defines autobiography as "The writing of one's own history; the story of one's life written by himself", thereby drawing attention to the silent and perhaps the only certain fact about autobiography: the fact that writing an autobiography is a reflexive activity, since the author and his subject are by definition the same person. Or so the ordinary conventions of thought and language and everyday life compel one to assume. But if one allows oneself to question the unity and identity of the person who writes the autobiography and the subject who is written about, and considers the possibility that neither the autobiographer nor the autobiographies are single selves but

are rather multiple sets of selves, it becomes apparent that the writer of an autobiography is engaged in an activity far more complex than the word "reflective" comes anywhere near to suggesting. The appropriate visual analogy ceases to be that of a painter painting a self-portrait and becomes that of someone occupying a temporal corridor of mirrors and communing in turn with images of past and present selves.

The previous paragraph is too abstract and obscure and must be tried again. It is, I am suggesting, misleadingly naive to suppose that writing an autobiography is simply a process during which a person writes down his memories of his past life, since neither the person writing the autobiography nor the person being written about is really such a simple entity as such a description would seem to imply. The autobiographer cannot be just a camera to his own past, but must (cannot but) select his memories in the light of his present conception of himself; and his memories are not just the direct visual tape recordings of the events in his past but are experiences pressing for (or sometimes resisting and eluding) imaginative recollection and carrying with them revivable past conceptions of both the author and his subject. The process of writing an autobiography is, I am suggesting, not one in which the present "I" records the events in the life of the past "me", but one in which a dialectic takes place between present "I" and past "me", at the end of which both have changed and the author-subject could say truthfully "I wrote It" and "It wrote me".

I am, of course, well aware that many books that purport to be autobiographies can fairly accurately be described as present "I" recalling "me", but such "books", which are typically written by politicians, public personalities famous for being famous and actors are really, better called *Memories or Recollections*. Their aim is not self-discovery or self-revelation but rather self-assertion, the making of a claim of deserving to be remembered, and I say more about such books later. But first I must explain why as a psychotherapist I should choose to write an autobiography in a way that has changed me immediately into such

obscurities as multiple selves and dialectics between past and present.

The reason is, of course, that as a psychotherapist I am compelled to question both the conception of himself and the history of his life that each patient brings to me initially. If he knew himself truly and his implicit, unwritten autobiography was accurate, he would surely not seek or need my assistance. As a result it has become natural for me to conceive of myself as an assistant autobiographer, concerned to notice and point out consistencies and recurrences that have not occurred to the patient himself, to point out biases in the direction of, typically, self-denigration or self-justification, and to discriminate between his own true voice and his learned imitations of other, typically, ancestral voices. It is striking that all the various schools of psychotherapy have developed terminologies for distinguishing between true and false self, between persona (mask) and self, between assertive ego and creative unconscious, between authentic and inauthentic, expressive and defensive, spontaneous and rigid. Given my immersion in patients and the learned literature, it is, I think, hardly surprising that my own ideal conception of an autobiography should be one in which the autobiographer remains in pursuit of himself while recounting himself, or that I should betray impatience with autobiographers who are merely advertising the continued existence of a long-standing ego.

It is, however, far from certain that such an ideal autobiography has or ever could be realized. Wordsworth's *The Prelude* and Proust's *A la Recherche du temps perdu* come to my mind as works in which the art is generated by the continued dialectic between the author's past and present, but although autobiographical, neither is strictly speaking an autobiography.

The intention of both is something other and more than the "writing of one's own history". Wordsworth described *The Prelude* as "the poem on the growth of my own mind" and, as his own mind in his own view was essentially a poet's mind, he was concerned with the growth of his poetic capacity and imagination and not with the story of all his other selves, and how they interwove and interacted to create the life of William Wordsworth Esq., distributor of stamps for the county of Westmorland and Poet Laureate. And Proust, if Roger Shattuck's and R. C. Zaehner's interpretation of *A la Recherche* is correct, was concerned to contrast the ephemerality, the intermittence, the pointlessness of life as lived by one's (his) everyday ego with the sense of permanence and timelessness revealed by those moments in which one is (he was) touched and surprised by live memory.

Then, immediately, the permanent essence of things which is usually hidden, is set free, and our real self, which often had seemed dead for a long time yet was not dead altogether, awakes and comes to life as it receives the heavenly food now proffered to it. One minute delivered from the order of time creates in us, that we may enjoy it, the man delivered from the order of time.

Few autobiographers, however, aim as high as Wordsworth and Proust, and something must be said about those who aim to do no more than tell the story of their own life. First, it has to be said that all autobiographies are of necessity incomplete accounts of their subject's life, since the beginning, birth and infancy, is beyond recall and can only be known about by hearsay, and the end, death, can only take place after the autobiographer has stopped

writing. The fantasy of being one's own Recording Angel, who has known and understood and perhaps forgiven everything, is unrealizable.

Secondly, an autobiography cannot be an accurate, complete record or chronicle of anyone's life, since it would take a life-time to record a life-time, and anyone who attempted to write a blow-by-blow account of his life would get caught in an infinite regress, having to spend time and words describing his autobiographizing. It has been said that history is the record of what each generation chooses to remember of its predecessors, and something analogous must apply to autobiography. It is, perhaps, a record by one self of what all its preceding selves have chosen to remember of their predecessors, though this implies that memory is more like a filtering sieve than I suspect it really is. Autobiographies cannot but be selective, the selection being based partly on what has been registered and is available for recall, and partly on the autobiographer's intentions. Self-justification, self-aggrandizement, confession and a talent to amuse will lead to different selections being made from a nearly infinite store of memories available. Extrovert public figures and artists primarily interested in their *vis à vis* will rather obviously recall different aspects of their lives and re-fight different kinds of battle when they come to write their autobiographies. Autobiographies are also unconsciously selective in a way that probably only doctors and psychoanalysts notice; they underestimate the part played by biological processes in the story of one's life. If anyone were to write a psychosomatic autobiography, giving equal weight to soma and psyche, not only would bodily functions play a larger role than existing autobiographical conventions allow them, but a quite different set of

patterns and connections would emerge.

Thirdly, autobiography has an inbuilt tendency towards something that has, I think, to be called falsification. The process of detaching that thread which is one's own life from the fabric which has been simultaneously woven by those around one, introduces an inherent bias towards egocentricity, at the expense of objectivity, and towards exaggeration of one's difference and alienation from others. There are, to be sure, ways in which an autobiographer may seek more or less successfully to correct this bias, notably by sharing the stage with someone else or something else, eg, his art or his profession, that he values as much as himself, but paradoxically this purchases truth (and often readability) at the cost of deviating from pure autobiography. The classic examples of the genre, eg, Cellini's and Rousseau's, were after all written by monumental egotists.

Social historians and literary critics, such as Lionel Trilling, tell us that autobiography is a comparatively recent literary genre and that its rise is a consequence and manifestation of "something like a mutation in human nature" — the phrase is Trilling's — that occurred in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. As a result of this mutation, that abstraction Modern Man came to conceive of himself as having a self, an identity, which was defined in terms of itself — and not, as previous men had defined themselves, in terms of their social role or achievements — and in terms of its opposition to, not membership of, society. As Trilling says: "The subject of an autobiography is just such a subject, bent on revealing himself in all his truth, bent that is to say, on demonstrating his sincerity." In other words, people became individuals and ceased to be mere limbs of the body politic, and their inner experiences, their private inner selves, became of paramount interest to themselves, and, if written down, of potential interest to others. On this view the writing of autobiographies, individualism and alienation are facets of a social, historical process that legitimizes egocentricity and makes one's own self-awareness an, perhaps even the, appropriate object of one's attention.

According to Lacan, the development of the modern "Je" was encouraged by the manufacture of mirrors. Blown glass mirrors were first manufactured on a commercial scale in Venice in the early sixteenth century and plate-glass mirrors became available and cheap early in the eighteenth. So, whereas Medieval Man can only have had fleeting and blurred impressions of his own body, Modern Man can see himself clearly in mirrors and has frequent opportunities for entrancing encounters with his own image. It is, therefore, tempting to correlate the enormous increase in the production of autobiographies in this century with the technological changes that have enabled people to make physical self-scrutiny a daily bathroom event and to see — and hear — themselves as others see them.

But maybe, as Trilling has pointed out, it was really all the other way round and it was the "something like a mutation in human nature" leading to greater self-awareness, that created the demand for mirrors and the impetus to invent cameras, films, and tape-recorders. In either case autobiographers are liable to become ensnared by one of the moral contradictions of our individualistic society. The pursuit of fame, cultivation of one's gifts in pursuit of self-fulfilment; searching for one's identity, writing the story of one's life, are all meritorious activities which, nonetheless, expose one to charges of egotism and vanity. Renan, who in late middle-age published his *Souvenirs d'enfance et de jeunesse*, none the less wrote "To suppose that the trivial details of one's own life are worth recording is to give proof of the pettiest vanity. One writes such things in order to communicate to others the theory of the universe one bears within oneself." And also "The man who has time to keep a private diary has never understood the immensity of the universe."

David Sweetman

## Generations

In its curious bottle the ginseng  
silently dances, a fossil tree,  
and my finger-print below its sellotaped label  
shows where I cut myself as a child.  
Under glass the Léger lithograph,  
pierced by a laser of wintry sun, travels back  
a quarter century before its time:  
the bullseye breast,  
the forbidding traffic-light colours  
dispersed in the water gardens at Giverny.

Sixteen in the Jou de Paume, to me  
the curling leaves of the waterlilies  
were discarded letters refusing to drown.  
Perhaps that is why I cage yours  
in this wire tray, trapping its emotion.  
Mother, you write of sadness at death,  
your fear of being left the last  
and I try to pierce the mist  
rising from your Yorkshire hills  
that fogs my paper-weight's crystal ball.

Five, I clutch at your coat, my hand  
wreath rubbing against the astakhan's  
convoluted hairs. Brilliantly,  
your hair is like a comet's tail,  
into humbugs gaudy as Egyptian pillows  
and on the bus we suck them,  
two drunken-cheeked old cronies.  
It seemed then that we could ride home forever  
through the unending afternoon,  
but light changes, we see what we feel

and can age as the panes darken,  
as this bottle dims,  
as the ginseng becomes an ancient hand  
wisply beckoning my Léger back,  
finally hermetic, sharp and primary.  
I cannot help you though I remember  
when I cut my finger on your brooch  
how you put the slit to your lips  
and drew me into you, tasting me  
as if I were the sweetest candy.



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## commentary

### Egg and ego

Peter Kemp

Jack London's *Tales of the Klondike: The One Thousand Dozen* Channel 4

Blackness - physical and psychological - is the prevailing atmosphere of Jack London's Klondike stories. Set against a background of icy immensities - "thousands of miles of silent white" - they chronicle chillingly extreme behaviour. Sub-human responses, it appears, are generated by sub-zero temperatures. "The Northerland is unregenerate because it is so cold there," thinks one of London's characters. "Fear of hell-fire cannot be bred in an ice-box."

Backing this up are numerous instances of reversion to savagery. Transfer to Alaska transforms Buck, the canine hero of *The Call of the Wild*, from a civilized domestic pet to a proudly primitive creature in whom "the dominant primordial beast" has been unleashed. Likewise, in the Klondike short stories, human beings who have journeyed north regularly regress to the animal: a woman makes "a cat-like leap" at an attacker; a man resembling "a ferocious ... dog" lets his anger rumble in his throat "in an animal-like way". Repeatedly, London goes into view what he calls "certain primal and analogous characteristics in a hungry wolf-dog or a starving man".

It was to be expected, then, that the television series, *Jack London's Tales of the Klondike*, would be strong on harsh environments and fierce activity. In the event, what the opening adaptation trotted out was comically tame. Yet this first story to be dramatized, "The One Thousand Dozen", should have been neither. Like a number of the Klondike pieces, it tracks the behaviour of an individual driven by monomania. As if in a parody of the usual rush for gold, David Rasmussen toils along the Yukon trail aiming to strike it rich, not by prospecting but by profiting from trade. Aware that famine in the Klondike has made food worth more than its weight in gold-dust, he heads for Dawson, the capital, with a cargo of eggs.

The story that charts his progress is both rough and elegant. Fragile but potentially worth a fortune, the eggs are neatly symbolic of the prospectors' ambitions; found, on arrival, to be

rotten, they supply a pungent analogy with the corruption London noted elsewhere in the Klondike. They also match the increasingly rancid state of Rasmussen himself. Struggling over obstacles with courageous audacity, he becomes emotionally and physically calloused, inflicting appalling injury on himself and other people.

For just a few moments, the television version looked likely to do justice to the story's vigour and did photographs of the Klondike with the trekking miners no more than a tiny trickle of black across vast slopes of snow - offered harrowingly frozen images of Arctic arduousness. Then the screen glowed into colour and the snow melted away - never to return: this rendered much of the story meaningless. Describing the feverish activity with which, as winter nears, boats are flung together for the journey up the not-yet-frozen river, London refers to "caulking, nailing and pitching in a frenzy of haste for which adequate explanation was not far to seek. Each day the snow-line crept farther down." Here, adequate explanation was extremely remote. Though Orson Welles, on the soundtrack, rumbled balefully about "the rapidly approaching winter", its advent was never signalled by so much as a snow-flake.

Accordingly, Rasmussen's searing odyssey appeared to demand nothing more strenuous than a spot of outward-bound boating. Aggravatingly protracted in the story, full of thwarted

doubtless-back, risky teeterings over ice-bridges, exhausted hackings along snow-clogged trails - his journey was straightened out and speeded up. The toll it took was ludicrously light. London's Rasmussen - his mouth a mess of "bean-sores" from his dismal diet - limps into Dawson ravaged by frost-bite, which has turned his nose and cheek-bones "bloody-black", cost him some toes, and gnawed hideously into his foot. The television Rasmussen neared the Midnight Sun with nothing more disfiguring than a five o'clock shadow. Remorselessly tepid, the play even substituted something milder for the story's bitter ending: instead of hanging himself, Rasmussen saved his skin by scampering away from the enraged miners who had bought his eggs. In staking a claim to these Jack London pieces Channel 4 must have hoped they had struck lucky; but, to judge from this first specimen, what they have on their hands is fool's gold, a virtually worthless travesty of the genuine thing.

### Wars of words

Richard Calvocoressi

German Writers and Artists in Exile Goethe Institute

Some 70,000 German-speaking refugees from Austria, Czechoslovakia and Germany were accepted by Britain during the 1930s, among them several distinguished writers, scientists, artists and academics. Many of those who were interned on the Isle of Man in 1940 were related to work for the Intelligence Corps or, if they were lucky, the German Service of the BBC, where they made a valuable contribution to the war of words against the Third Reich. To celebrate fifty years of "German Writers in Exile", the Goethe Institute recently held a symposium in its elegant premises in Princess Gate, in collaboration with the London-based PEN Centre of German-speaking Authors (Abroad).

PEN had been established in Germany as early as 1925; its first secretary was Herwarth Walden, whose expressionist periodical *Der Sturm* before the First World War carried a series of sharp, intense drawings by Kokoschka (who also worked for a time as Walden's assistant). When Hitler came to power, German PEN was taken over by Nazi sympathizers and Walden was forced to flee. On the initiative of Ernst Toller, Max Hermann Neisser and others,

German PEN in exile "representing free German literature" was founded in 1934, with Heinrich Mann as its first president. During 1938-39 this group, working with the English branch of PEN, endeavoured to rescue a number of threatened writers from Austria and Czechoslovakia and arrange for their emigration to England. The secretary of German PEN in exile from 1941 until 1950 was Richard Friedenthal, novelist and biographer of Goethe, who then became its president for two years. As editor of a popular German literary journal, *Die Welt*, he was for twelve years a marked man.

The Goethe Institute audience heard lectures by Will Schaber, a former president, and H. G. Adler, the current holder of the post, on the history of PEN and on England as a traditional haven for exiled German writers and thinkers. Eggon Larsen's film *Die kamen nach London*, made for Bavarian television in 1964, was shown; there were readings from the work of various PEN members past and present; and Robert Lucas gave a talk on satire as a weapon against Nazi propaganda. An illustrated presentation of re-educational propaganda aimed at the Germans, was somewhat glowing in its depiction of an England glowing with racial harmony. But it included a number of poignant interviews with ordinary people - a decorator, a textile manager, turned

### Private reasons

Patricia Craig

P. D. JAMES

Death of an Expert Witness Anglia TV

There are two kinds of satisfactory detective fiction. One goes in for trickery and intricacy, is blatantly artificial in design and often witty in style, or at least comic. The other creates an effect of realism, in defiance of the pattern required by the genre, by concentrating on the characters it deals with rather than on the exercise of ingenuity involved in its construction. P. D. James, who writes the second kind, has pointed out that the professional policeman, like her hero Dalgleish, is rather more of an administrator than the first kind allows - there, for the sake of dramatic effect, and also to promote brand loyalty in the reader, it's necessary to have the hero actually on the scene of each crime, interrogating suspects and conducting the investigation himself.

This is a fairly slight departure from reality, and so is the convention that makes the detective enigmatic as well as proficient; the latter is necessary, of course, to ensure that the final surprise will be fully effective. The most obvious use of artifice occurs in the arrangement of suspects around a victim, all of them furnished with a plausible motive for the murder and each being subjected, in turn, to unnerving scrutiny. The serious writer of detective fiction, who chooses to stress the naturalistic aspects of the plot, rather than the unnatural framework imposed upon it, must be an acute observer of people's psychological peculiarities as well as an adroit technician.

P. D. James exactly fits the bill, which is why her novels so quickly acquired an enthusiastic readership, and why, as the current Anglia adaptation by Robin Chapman, directed by Herbert Wise, shows, they turn so readily into agreeable television serials, with every attribute necessary to engross an audience: mystery, tension, intriguing behaviour convincingly embodied, and so forth. The film's verisimilitude endorses the author's, instead of drawing attention to the absence of this quality in the original work (which tends to happen with the novels of an author like Agatha Christie, whose fests of

delicatessen-owning, a trades unionist, a wine-merchant, an old age pensioner - explaining why they would never return to Germany).

One of the more interesting addresses, by Alfred Unger, was concerned with the "politicization" of the Free German League of Culture. This organization was founded in London in 1938 by Fred Uhlmann, Oskar Kokoschka and others who felt the lack of a forum where refugee artists could hold discussions, put on plays, and exhibitions, and work effectively in the anti-Nazi cause. The League contained several Communists who remained relatively quiet until after the breakdown of the Nazi-Soviet pact and Hitler's invasion of Russia, when they came increasingly to dominate its activities. As a result, the non-Communist members, tired of infighting, formed a splinter movement, Club 1943, which still meets in London today; while after the war many of those who adhered to the Free German League went to live in East Germany. Some of the League's publications (in which Kokoschka "tried to lay a few humanistic cuckoo-eggs", as he later wrote) were on show at the Goethe Institute, "together with portrait sketches of prominent figures from the arts such as Brecht, Piscator, Max Reinhardt, Marieluise, Dietrich, Heinrich Heine and Stefan Zweig, the Viennese caricaturist, Benedikt Fried, Dolbin, who worked in Berlin from 1926 until 1933.

prestidigitation impress while he characterization appals).

It is playful of P. D. James to use *Death of an Expert Witness* as a forensic science laboratory, with clues to murder dispersed among people and business is the scientific evaluation of clues. Here, in the opening chapter you find Dr Lorrimer (Geoffrey Palmer in the television dramatization) behaving in the foolhardy manner of the archetypal victim, at long last positively going out of his way to incite a killer. Only Brenda Pridmore (Chloe Franks), the young forensic biologist who takes a kind of interest in her scientific ambitions, it is who comes on the body of Dr Lorrimer, on the floor of the body of the Lab, after some hard-pressed work has been to work with a mallet.

A blood-stained overall, some particles of vomit and three dark hairs from two separate heads are among clues which go out from Hoggin Forensic Science Laboratory to return to it for analysis in the course of a lively investigation. P. D. James, Commander Adam Dalgleish, policeman and poet (Roy Marsden quickly on the spot (by helicopter) listening and assessing, speaking out to the delinquent and with his facile consolation from the distressed no high spirits - turning an enquiry into a romp - or idiosyncrasy here, is plain authoritative and bleakly Dalgleish's traits, we are given a understanding from the novel, have been intensified by a tragedy in his past: death of his wife in childbirth with the couple's only son. The television version, which is later than the original work than such problems usually are, has nevertheless inserted this emotional incident into the middle of the current investigation, a consequence very nearly unholy in itself.

Only Roy Marsden's impeccable performance, a restores to the drama the dead decorum it thoughtlessly relinquished over this business.

If the second episode (the book's dramatized in serial parts) shows a slight falling off, too, it's large because you find Dr Lorrimer is obliged to come out with certain phrases which have no authenticity at all outside the overwrought letter where they originally appeared. Some episode later a clue, not contained in the book in the form of a look on the murderer's face when someone makes a assumption spectacularly wide of the mark, gets into the dramatization and nearly gives the game away. This was taken in the interests of clarity and concision, worthwhile objectives which have occasioned one of the other small alterations, most of them necessary and fruitful. You never lose interest in the string of police enquiries devised by P. D. James, erotic case in a disguised chapter, a slight case of corruption in the CID, the nervous condition of Lorrimer's subordinate. What is behind it all? "There is always", as W. H. Auden noted on the topic of the colourful veggie, a feature of the detective genre, "a secret, a private reason for this."

Brenda Pridmore, discoverer of first body, quickly discovers a second one, in rather more complex circumstances, prompting (in book form) a revealing revelation of the hearted woman to reveal the truth about human beings after all. Actually, it's a case of P. D. James to make these women speak with "compassionate gentleness" within a few pages of one another and to "utter the truth" child. (She has always resisted the impulse to poke fun at the extreme experiences undergone by characters; unlike certain other authors who gain their effects by refusing to distinguish between comedy and tragedy, P. D. James is disinclined to take a frivolous view of death.) The television dramatization is credit, too, to the careful reproduction of the author's East Anglian setting. This contributes a particular kind of atmosphere to a piece of high class entertainment.

## commentary

### Speaking volumes

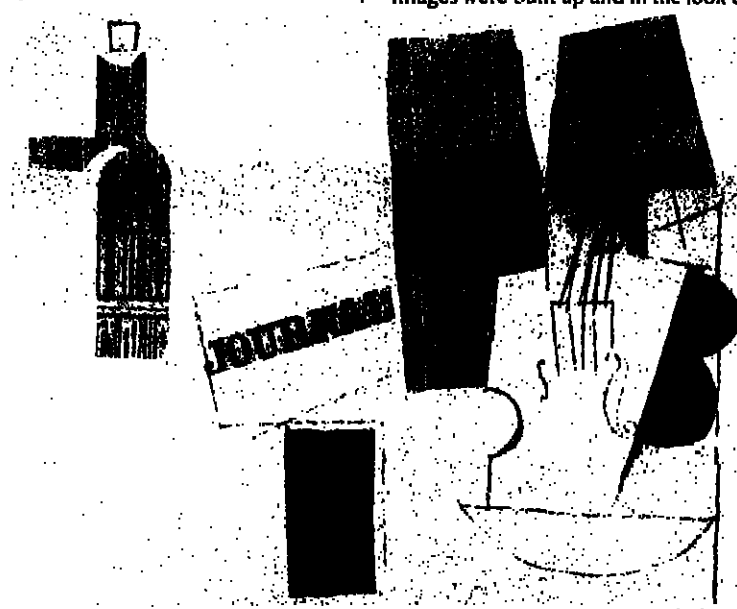
Antonia Phillips

The Essential Cubism 1907-1920 Tate Gallery

From the start, Cubism was acclaimed as a new way of representing reality, a challenge to the orthodoxy of single point linear perspective. It was thought of as revealing objects as we know them to be, rather than as they appear to us. But these contrasts are misleading, and likely to hinder understanding of the Cubist work of Braque and Picasso by suggesting that what these two painters were doing was applying a rival system. Of course they discarded perspective, but the products of their extraordinary *pas de deux*, especially the "hermetic" paintings of 1910-1912, defy any attempt to see in them a representational procedure as systematic as the one they rejected.

There are a number of projection systems, some more ancient, some more modern than perspective, and painters, both Western and Oriental, have used approximate versions of most of them. Cézanne occasionally appears to use oblique projection, which without being perspectival can show, from no fixed point of view, an object's front, top and a side face; the represented objects gain solidity and plumpness at the price of distortion - but this, as both Ingres and Cézanne knew, could be an immensely expressive device. Braque is reputed to have been inspired by engineering drawings, which can provide a complete specification of an object's structure by showing three faces or views of it, but of course these are not usually joined together, since to do so would introduce distortions unwelcome in a technical drawing. But the pictures in which Braque and Picasso began to break down the surfaces of things into facets potentially reflecting different aspects or views show that how they faced objects was not related to an enterprise, like the engineer's, of conveying maximum information about the structure of things, so much as dictated by compositional, formal demands. Clear examples may be found among Braque's early landscapes from L'Estaque, with their Cézannesque palette of greens and ochres and piling of forms - of houses,

trees, rocks - up the canvas; or among Picasso's figures and still lifes. In "Fan, Salt Box and Melon" (1909) Picasso has beautifully dovetailed subject-matter and form: the segmented melon, its inside invitingly pale, echoes the fan's blades as they sweep into the cool folds of green drapery, guiding the eye down both canvas and table-top



Picasso's "Guitar, Newspaper, Glass and Bottle", papers collés, 1913, from the exhibition reviewed here, and reproduced in its catalogue (by Douglas Cooper and Gary Tinterow. 448pp. Tate Gallery, £9.50. 0 905005 24 4).

into a medley of faceted objects nestling in crumpled cloth.

The structure of facets and volumes of these first years soon comes to be dominated - but never flattened - by one of line and tone. Where the edges of objects, or of shadows, or of planes meet, lines - but not outlines - grow; shadows continue to be displaced, shaping volumes without indicating light sources. The broken surfaces become increasingly abstracted from the solid object, and seem alternately to quiver and float or be caught like butterflies in a pyramid of intersecting planes, angles and lines. Colour drains away, leaving neutral browns and greys. Subject-matter recedes beneath this abstract skin, but survives hieroglyphically: pipe, beerglass, musical instruments, eyes, moustaches are signalled piecemeal. At the Tate the paintings of this brief and puzzling period are hung closely packed in one

room - being there induces a dizziness with both visual and intellectual roots - and the only flaw in the arrangement of the exhibition is that the drawings related to this period are not nearby, where they can clarify the paintings.

Braque's invention of *papiers collés* led to radical changes, both in how the images were built up and in the look of

structurally organize - a touch mechanically - the arrangement of planes, lines and colours. By the middle of the decade, circa 1914 onwards, Gris's paintings show signs of experimentation with systems of projection - perhaps as an analogue to Braque's method of arranging pieces of paper to explore compositional alternatives. What Gris seems to have done is to outline several projections of an object, tilting them fan-like across the picture surface. Rough versions of oblique and isometric projection can be recovered; the latter converts rectangular table-tops into diamonds (Nos 60, 68) and is prominent in "Harlequin Seated Beside a Table". In this painting the diamond pattern of Harlequin's clothing recurs stencilled over the larger diamond of the table (in precise isometric projection) and is repeated in the tiled floor, reminiscent of the chequered floors dear to Renaissance virtuosos in perspective. In "Sunblind" the front and top faces of the table mount up into the drop of a venetian blind; in "Violin and Bow on a Table" the dadoed wall-panelling, table-top and legs appear to be on the same vertical plane. Similar distortions occur in oriental paintings, with their shallow pictorial space and absence of viewpoint - an effect which Gris's use of tilting increases. He disguised these methods with partial occlusions, or superimpositions without occlusion (yielding an effect of transparency); or by interrupting surfaces with false attachments, and by blocking in colours where they don't belong. Gris's Cubism is a far cry from the Cubism of Braque and Picasso.

The Tate Gallery has mounted a hugely demanding and excellent exhibition. The boldness of Picasso and Braque's pre-Cubist experiments is still breathtaking - those bizarre savage figures, their bodies twisted and hatched with blue shadows (Picasso's "Standing Nude"), their mask-faces either glaring at us, as in Picasso's self-portrait, or gaping, empty-socketed. The progressive and symbiotic articulation of ideas by Braque and Picasso, with its astonishing technical inventiveness, is there to be followed and studied given enough stamina. And even though "Les Femmes d'Alger" is not included in the show, there are other signs of homage to Ingres; as well as to Cézanne and African sculpture.

He was the best three-quarter I have ever seen" becomes positively zany when Kurt is played by a self-possessed twelve-year-old New Yorker, Matthew Hansell; the random conversational fragments of the wedding-guests (a technique lifted directly from Firkbank) are also very funny, and Kenneth King's Doctor and Father Christmas have a demagogic performance; he combines brooding authority with callow vulnerability; his diction is clear and searching, and his major speeches achieve a startling frisson.

The years 1907 to 1929 that Auden specified are those from his own birth to the completion of *Paid*, and hint further at his identification with John Nower, in whose plight he alludes to his own attempts to find wholeness in the teachings of John Layard (whom he visited in Belgium between writing the two versions of the play), his reluctant surrender to his homosexuality and the matrimonial oppression which *Paid* more violently and emblematically enacts. Its final choric vision of "Big fruit, eagles above the stream" is of an unattainable - and hence unpeopled - land of plenty and fulfillment. Playing out a further biographical irony this production accompanies Dick's departure from the Nower demagogue with the dawn sea-music from *Peter Grimes*, music envisioned by Britten on Long Island at the moment when he resolved "to leave America in a profound and creative nostalgia for home."

It must be admitted that amid all this scintillating some of the verbal detail is lost, and despite discreet amplification the problem of choric speaking not fully resolved. Auden stipulates a chorus of no more than three; here two couples address these elliptically lyrical and ironic poems to the audience in either aisle of the church, but too fast and without evident understanding. On the other hand the comic scene in the bar, with its English chat ("How's the Rucker going?" "Did you ever see Warner? No, he'd be over your time

### Middle-class mumming

Alan Hollinghurst

W. H. AUDEN

*Paid on Both Sides* St Mark's-in-the-Bowery, New York City

When he lived at 77 St Mark's Place, W. H. Auden was a parishioner of St Mark's Church in the Bowery where he allegedly "coughed his way through many a sermon, sitting in the back pew". One of the oldest buildings in Manhattan, the galleried neo-Classical Church is now converted into a community centre on its central games floor the Eye and Ear Theater present Auden's early "Charade" *Paid on Both Sides*, a mysterious American contribution to the amorphous festival, *British Satires New York*. There is a suggestive circularity in this presentation of a product of Auden's European youth in the chosen city of his later life: for the play is a work of submerged autobiography, and describes a search for wholeness and love which, with other things, was to lead Auden, a decade later, to New York itself.

Although it enjoyed many student productions - almost from its publication in 1930, *Paid on Both Sides* has remained a work to be read; like some of the other verse-dramas of Eliot's *Sweeney Agonistes*, which it closely follows in time, its pleasures are more literary than theatrical. Auden's many-layered, contrivance involves a

conflation of what he saw as the gangster-ethic of Icelandic saga with the stylized subtleties of middle-class schoolboy ethics; he creates a dense verbal medium in which skaldic concision, obscure lyricism and parody period talk challengingly co-exist. At once provocatively allusive and self-protectively opaque, the printed text appears to defy coherent production.

Bob Holman's attempt is as successful as it is because it invests its energies in the very youthfulness of Auden's imagined world. For all its precocity, *Paid* is a work which has a certain comic-strip quality, like Isherwood's story "Gems of Belgian Architecture". Its excitements are derived from the charged and determining experiences of youth. The argument of the play, in the final printed version, demonstrates this wholeness - symbolized in the dramatic pivot of the work - the aesthetic powers of the family feud which reaches back into communal memory will still prevent a reconciliation with the diseased and self-destructive outer world. Yet these deep matters are set out by Auden in terms that weld together schoolboy imaginings, undergraduate reading and modal psychosomatic dogma.

This exposition of a youthful crisis in the very terms of bookish youthful fantasy is actively diversified by the energetic young cast. Unable in the large space to play out their vendetta as a claustrophobic drawing-room

charade, they enterprisingly deploy the whole church, punning on the plastered apse (for Auden's "raised pews") in which the birth and death of John Nower are presented, in baroque tableaux vivants, as Nativity and Pietà; and on the floor itself, marked out for volleyball, where they present a diverting session of games and exercises as the performance begins.

Auden directed that there be no scenery, so as pointedly to emphasize the symbolic relevance of the charade to the domestic circumstances in which it takes place: "A parable of English middle-class life, the play is a work of the imagination." Like Isherwood's story "Gems of Belgian Architecture", its excitements are derived from the charged and determining experiences of youth. The argument of the play, in the final printed version, demonstrates this wholeness - symbolized in the dramatic pivot of the work - the aesthetic powers of the family feud which reaches back into communal memory will still prevent a reconciliation with the diseased and self-destructive outer world. Yet these deep matters are set out by Auden in terms that weld together schoolboy imaginings, undergraduate reading and modal psychosomatic dogma.

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### Oxford University Press



# Behind the lines

Robert Hewison

Should you be in any doubt about the political decision you intend to make on June 9, why not make your choice on literary critical grounds? Some timely information on the literary activities of our Parliamentarians has recently appeared in a paper by Trevor Smith, of Queen Mary College, London, entitled "Men of Affairs as Men of Letters: The Literary Output of British MPs, 1935-82". He gave the paper last month at the annual conference of the Political Studies Association.

Smith has analysed four specific Parliamentary sessions since 1935, but his most important contribution is a tabulation of the literary productions of MPs in 1981-82. The authorship of MPs is difficult to categorize precisely, but Smith includes in his calculations the publication of books, pamphlets, collections of speeches, prefaces and articles contributed to group volumes. By this token some 35 per cent of MPs had publications in 1981-82, the highest number recorded in terms of both authors and titles.

The breakdown by parties is revealing politically and culturally. The Conservatives, with over a third of the Parliamentary Party as authors, have overtaken Labour in figures for literary production. This indication of a cultural shift to the right is underlined by the predominance of "dry" over "wet" writing on the Government benches. Political subjects account for 60 per cent of their titles, naturally enough, but we should also note the twelve works by David Mudd (Falmouth and Camborne) "exclusively devoted to Cornish themes".

The most prolific Labour MP was Greville Janner with thirty-six titles, mainly on legal matters; next is Tony Benn with twenty-three, and Sir Harold Wilson with twenty. Smith notes in passing of Sir Harold's publications that Richard Crossman's *Diaries* have had a distinct influence on legislative writing. Regardless of the Official Secrets Act, revelations of "unpleasant and lurid details" have become de rigueur.

The Liberal Party, meanwhile, has

redoubled its efforts at the typewriter, with seven out of twelve as authors. Freud's six titles, mostly devoted to cookery. The arrival of their Alliance partners, the SDP, during 1981 has complicated literary as well as psephological calculations. Smith notes that three of the SDP's four founders each launched a book along with the party. (Does this hint at political divisions to come?) Ironically, the European activities of Roy Jenkins, who has more claim than most MPs to a literary reputation, exclude him from Smith's calculations.

The survey has led Smith to some fascinating conclusions. The first is that far from eroding the importance of the printed word, the electronic media have enhanced it, and as a result more MPs are writing more books and pamphlets than they did fifty years ago. Indeed the book has become the key medium for ideological debate. (Indirectly, this must be a criticism of the balanced, bogus discussions of television.) But why are MPs writing more?

Smith has some trenchant comments on the relationship between practical politics and academic political thinking. While career MPs increasingly choose "politics facilitating occupations" such as journalism, there has been a virtual disappearance of "the essentially public, politically committed university teacher". The academicization of political discussion has drained it of ideological fervour, though the rise of technocratic reformism has not meant that academics have kept out of politics.

Campaigners such as G. D. H. Cole, R. H. Tawney and Harold Laski have been replaced by a new breed of politically-oriented academic: "the closet partisan" who makes his contribution not as an orator, party oligarch or legislator, but as a ministerial henchman drawing a salary as a temporary civil servant. These new partisans are happy to give technical advice, but are not prepared to engage in larger questions of Liberty, Equality or Fraternity. Deprived of intellectual nourishment,

MPs have been driven to providing it for themselves.

I put it to Trevor Smith that by implication he was criticizing his fellow academics, regardless of party, for their lack of political engagement, and he agreed. I therefore asked him, as Head of the Political Studies Department of Queen Mary College, which party he recommended readers of the TLS to vote for. "Vote for the most thoughtful" was his reply, in what sounded like the guarded tones of a closet partisan.

One reason that Trevor Smith does not adduce for the increased literary productivity of MPs is that in 1979 they made authorship marginally more profitable for themselves by passing the Public Lending Right Act. This is a timely moment to remind you that registrations for the first tranche of PLR money, to be paid out in February 1984, have to be with the Registrar by June 30.

The first registration period for PLR - the money will be calculated on a sample of public library loans made between January and June this year - has proved controversial. In spite of the Registrar's best endeavours, registration has proved an irksome, bureaucratic process. The difficulty of tracing past collaborators, and especially illustrators, has caused delays for many. The final figures for the first period of registration may prove even more controversial: after all the fury of the PLR campaign, authors have proved reluctant to come forward to claim their due.

At the time of writing, with some six weeks to go before the registrations close, the PLR computers in Stockton-on-Tees list 5,356 authors and 48,200 books - an average of nine titles per author. This is certainly well short of the 10,000 or more authors who were expected to register, though to be fair there was no way a figure could be arrived at except by inviting applications. The Registrar, John Sumson, is reserving judgment. He expects to have some 50,000 titles registered by the end of June, and he

calculates that in any one year some 20,000 of the titles added to the Public Library stock would be eligible for PLR. Well over half the authors that the scheme was intended to benefit - that is to say authors popular with Public Library borrowers - have registered for PLR.

Which means that probably a third of those the scheme could benefit have not bothered to apply - though registration will of course continue after June 30. There is also the possibility of a last-minute rush, and applications have picked up recently. The PLR office is hoping to stimulate applications with testimonials from such satisfied registrars as Ronald Dahl, Angus Wilson, Dick Francis and A. J. P. Taylor, but there are still plenty of authors who appear never to have heard of PLR. The final tally on June 30 could provide embarrassing ammunition for the enemies of the scheme. The Registrar of PLR is at Bayneath House, Prince Regent Street, Stockton-on-Tees, Cleveland TS1 8IDF.

While television appears to have had a stimulating effect on the art of political pamphleteering, what has been the influence of the medium, and in particular television arts programmes, on the arts in general? This often uneasy relationship will be the subject of a weekend conference at the Institute of Contemporary Arts on June 11 and 12.

The conference will be preceded by a two-week season of screenings of television arts programmes. This amounts to a miniature film festival, with evenings devoted to the work of John Read, the director of the first ever television arts documentary, and to auteur directors such as Leslie Galloway and Barrie Gavin. However, the programming has produced some critical juxtapositions: an episode from the late Lord Clark's culture-consumer oriented *Civilization* will be followed by a section from John Berger's politically agonized *Ways of Seeing*.

Conference speakers include the doyen of arts programming, Melvyn Bragg (in a session chaired by the

doyenne of arts presenters, Joan Bakewell), Richard Somerset Ward, Head of BBC Music and Arts, and Michael Kustow, Arts Commissioning Editor of Channel 4. But the most established personalities and practices of public and commercial television can expect to be challenged by critics like Peter Fuller and John Wyer, both of whom are putting their ideas into practice with films for Channel 4.

Somehow television will have to break out of the hackneyed formulae that programme executives have imposed. While some art historians may have pronounced the artist's dead as critical forms, they are also limited in the subject matter it chooses: performance is preferred to critical assessment, "heritage" subjects are more favoured than the risqué avant-garde or rough-edged popular culture. (The ultimate arts programme was once dreamed up in the canteen of BBC Kensington House, *Gala Trend*.)

At the conference, independent producers like Geoff Dunlop of Channel 4's *Illuminations* will argue that television has many unrealized opportunities for opening up the relationship between the medium and the arts. Television must become more a participant in the creative process, and less an embarrassed and distant presenter.

In the meantime, what of television's financial participation in the arts? On the face of it the BBC and commercial television are important patrons of living artists. But, outside the field of music, the minority status of arts programmes gives the accounts an excuse to keep budgets low. The real difficulty, however, is that television's much more ready to exploit already hard-won creative resources than invest in the production of new ones. With very few exceptions television corporations contribute nothing beyond facility fees to the arts they present. The ICA has had financial assistance from Channel 4 in setting up this conference, but no company that it worthwhile to support the ICA as a regular basis.

Conference speakers include the doyen of arts programming, Melvyn Bragg (in a session chaired by the

## The Falklands War

Sir, - Geoffrey Wheatcroft in his elegant review (May 13) of the literature of the Falklands campaign rebukes me for my syntax, dotiness, and a number of other misdemeanours. Doubtless he wrote his piece before the two investigative journalists who have actually taken the trouble to go to Lima and inquire about the Belgrano and the Peruvian Peace Plan, Paul Foot of the *Daily Mirror* and David Taylor of BBC *Newsnight*, returned and supported what I had been saying.

In accusing me of parliamentary monomania, Wheatcroft reveals that however considerable his literary knowledge and ability, he knows nothing about the Labour Party and the House of Commons. Often one has to say things that go contrary to received wisdom twenty-three times - on the twenty-fourth occasion, people begin to take notice.

Partly as the result of the behaviour about which Wheatcroft complains, serious people are beginning to ask the question: Just why did Mrs Thatcher sink the Belgrano, without consulting the Americans, whose hemispheric relations would be affected, without checking with her own Foreign Secretary, whose stated purpose in being in Washington and New York on Sunday, May 2, was the pursuit of peace, at a time when the Belgrano and her escorts were of no threat to the fleet?

TAM DALYELL.  
House of Commons.

## Johnson's Dictionary

Sir, - I'm sorry to be a bore about Samuel Johnson, but the reiteration by J. P. Kenyon in his review of John Burt Foster's *Johnson's Dictionary* (April 29) of the hoary legend that the purpose of Johnson's *Dictionary* was "stabilization rather than definition" gets, after a century and a half, to be pretty boring too.

I wonder whether either Kenyon or Barrall has ever glanced at the preface to the *Dictionary*, where Johnson states that its purpose is not to "form, but register" the language, and that, though he may have started with the thought that the work might "fix our language", his years of lexicography have taught him that this is an "expectation which neither reason nor experience can justify". Or at the contents of the *Dictionary* itself, where the ninety-four different shades of meaning of the verb to set that Johnson distinguishes might lead one to speculate that he was considerably interested in definition, or more precisely, recording current usage.

The one sentence that Kenyon gives, out of context, from Johnson's preface to Dyer, does nothing to support his view. He makes much of the phrase "the irreverence habitually annexed to trade and manufacture". Johnson does not say that he so annexes it. In fact, he was not in the least ashamed of his status as the son of a small bookseller, in spite of his final lack of success. He brought the Johnson family at least a ring or two up the ladder from grinding poverty. Johnson went out of his way to praise the members of "the Trade" as "generous, liberal-minded men". There is the story of his scornful prospective buyers at the auction of the Thrale (later Courage) brewery. "We are not here to sell a parcel of bottles and vats, but the potentially of growing rich beyond the dreams of avarice." And of his saying loudly to Reynolds, at a gathering where he thought their hostess was paying undue attention to a visiting duchess, "How much do you think you would get in a week, if we were to work as hard as we could?" - as if they had been common mechanics, adds Rowley, whose own snobbery, for careless readers, seems to have rubbed off on Johnson.

The "meaniness naturally adorning" to trade and manufacture is a point of literary, not social, criticism. Dyer's long, unreadable set of verses "The Piece" was an attempt to make poetry

out of the minutiae of the production and manufacture of wool - one of many unsuccessful attempts in the eighteenth century to do what the genius of Virgil had uniquely succeeded in doing with agriculture in the *Georgics*. "Clothing and agriculture in great words," Johnson described Dyer's technique. Kenyon (or Barrall) commends the work because it "represents the woolen industry as a corporate effort in which humble weavers and shepherds, wealthy merchants and noble landowners join their labours one with another". A laudable project, no doubt, but fairly unpromising material for poetry. If Eliot, instead of writing *The Waste Land*, had put together a similar didactic work describing the day-to-day activities and corporate effort of Lloyd's Bank, it would probably have as few readers today as Dyer's *Piece*. Nor do contemporary poets seem intent on composing epics or georgics expounding the corporate intricacies of North Sea oil production. This may indicate a false set of values on the part of readers and writers of poetry, but if so, Johnson can hardly be blamed for it.

The legend so dear to British historians that Johnson was an "elitist", authoritarian snob in his lexicography, as well as in everything else, seems to have been started by Macaulay, who, in his ignorance, thought Johnson despised history. (There is a useful book on its way to publication which will show that Johnson took history very seriously.) It has continued to be propagated by many of Macaulay's successors, notably his fellow-peer Lord Dacre of Glanton. As good a comment as any on the continuation, by those who have not looked at the *Dictionary*, of the tradition that its purpose is to exalt "the role of the gentleman", "the refinement of language", and so on, is the ungentlemanly and unrefined quotation from Swift that Johnson, probably with relish, gives there in illustration of the verb to piss: "One ass pisses; the rest piss for company."

DONALD GREENE.  
Department of English, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California 90007.

## Freudianism and Greek Myth

Sir, - At the beginning of her review of Georges Devereux's *Femme et mythe* (May 6) Mary Lefkowitz objects to the fact that Freudians "have used Greek myth [especially the myth of Oedipus] as a guidebook to human behaviour. Never mind that... in Sophocles' drama at least, Oedipus' problem is not his sexuality but the limitations of his (human) knowledge. For an orthodox Freudian like Georges Devereux, myth is a collective representation of the unconscious that is revealed to individuals through their dreams."

Because of the centrality of dreams in Freud's analysis of how "the basic patterns of man's emotions" are revealed, Lefkowitz might have been fair to Freud by quoting some crucial lines in Sophocles' play, part of the colloquy between Jocasta and Oedipus in the Third Episode. Here Jocasta says, "Nor should I thou fear this wedding horrible / With thine own mother: many men there be / That in their dreams have done this act. He best / Supports his life who counts these things as naught." (Translation by Clarence W. Mendall.) Freud has attempted to demonstrate that these things should not be counted as naught.

Moreover, while I would agree with the reviewer's argument that Devereux's interpretations of Greek myth are unduly strained in order to accommodate his prejudices, particularly what appears to be his male chauvinism, I cannot subscribe to her own prejudice which holds that no interpretation at all can be valid if it pretends to find correlations and relevances between ancient myth and the modern search for self-knowledge. The principle on which this prejudice is founded is stated in the last two sentences of the review: "The ancient Greeks wrote their myths about themselves and their society. Familiar and appealing as these stories may

## to the editor

remain, they were not meant to be fables for our own time." Her contention here is correct but quite beside the point. One might say with equal force that Shakespeare, Swift and Pope wrote "about themselves and their society" and that their works "were not meant to be fables for our time". But they are!

CHESTER L. RIESS.  
1610 Avenue N, Brooklyn, New York 11230.

## 'Room's Classical Dictionary'

Sir, - Adrian Room has the "amusing habit", says J. H. C. Leach in his review of *Room's Classical Dictionary* (May 20), "of citing verbs by the first person singular of the present tense, but translating them as though they were infinitives". But Adrian Room is in good company: both Liddell and Scott and Lewis and Short follow the same practice. As it saves two letters per active verb in Latin as well as in Greek, the publishers of both lexicons must have saved a lot of printing-ink since their first editions more than a century ago.

KENNETH T. DUTFIELD.  
1-2 Market Square, Minchinhampton, Stroud, Gloucestershire.

## 'Lycidas'

Sir, - The letter from Robert Barnes and others (April 8) raises intriguing possibilities.

Alastair Fowler has located ten unrhymed lines in *Lycidas*, occurring in the first nine stanzas: lines 1 (more), 13 (wind), 22 (shroud), 39 (caves), 51 (Lycidas), 82 (Jove), 91 (winds), 92 (swain), 161 (mount) ("To Shepherd's Ear: The Form of Milton's *Lycidas*" in Alastair Fowler (ed.), *Silent Poetry: Essays in Metapoetics* (Cambridge, 1970), pp. 170-80). Employing the technique pioneered by Fowler in *Spenser and the Numbers of Time*, of isolating centrepieces, if we disregard the first word of the series, its centrepiece is *Lycidas*. Turning to the poem itself, Fowler regards the short lines as dividers and finds the centrepiece at line 102 with a sovereign image of *Lycidas*'s head:

Built in th' eclipse and rag'd with curses  
That sunk so low that sacred head of mine.

This structural centre with its image of sinking the seas as counterbalanced by the central stanza vi, with the enjambement of Phoebeus, which I find pointed up by the stanza's closing lines with their image of Jove in judgment. This seems to suggest that the couple of endwords at lines 91-2 are significant (*winds, swain*). To summarize the first cluster of endwords: *wind* (with a play on "winding sheet")-*shroud*-*well* (as images of death, descent and burial); the last cluster *winds* (taking up and inverting the significance of *wind* at the beginning of the first cluster); *swain*-*mount* are images of Resurrection, lines 161-3 being an invocation of prayer to St Michael the Archangel, to receive the soul of *Lycidas*, thus echoing the Requiem *Offertory*, *Sedentes in Memento*, *representes eas in lucem sanctam*.

To point a sharp dichotomy between classical and Christian is anachronistic. Milton was working in a recognized and consistent tradition of Renaissance neoplatonism and his treatment of classical mythology in order to integrate it into Christian faith is totally justified. Also, as his education was classical, so his poetry is nourished by classical literature, and he has found a model for this poem in the pastoral as revived and developed by Petrarch, Mantuan and Alexander Barclay. Thus the classical allusions, ushered in by the invocation to the Muses, signify King's vocation as a poet and include and identify Milton with King. They are also, in reference to shepherds, to Orpheus, to Phoebeus as *sol iustitia*, bifocal, and classical allusion and Christian faith, hope and vision blend into a coherent artistic unity.

PETER THORNBUR.  
St Saviour's Vicarage, Hanley Road, London N4.

## Defects in Books

Sir, - I wonder if I am exceptional among your readers in finding that an increasing number of defective books are reaching the shelves in bookshops. So far this year I have had to return books no less than five times: twice because entire gatherings were lacking, once because the colour plates were out of register, once because the leaves were creased in printing, leaving broken lines of text, and infuriatingly in this instance, the replacement copy was itself imperfect, having a hole in one of the leaves.

These are serious defects: all occurred in expensive scholarly books, three published by major university presses. I have not counted those books which are shop or warehouse-soiled, nor those that are simply badly manufactured.

In all these instances the booksellers concerned have agreed to replace the defective copies without question, but this is scant compensation for the time and expense involved, especially if, as is often the case with specialist academic works, the book has gone out of print in the meantime.

I do not know what the book trade's solution will be. I for one now collate all my books as soon as I have bought them. I would urge my fellow-readers to do likewise if they wish to protect themselves against increasingly inferior merchandise being offered in the shops.

ANTHONY PAYNE.  
36 Kerrison Road, London SW11.

## Charles Darwin

Sir, - Alan Mackay's review of, among other titles, Jeremy Cherfas's *Man-Made Life* and Paul and Anne Ehrlich's *Extinction* (April 15) contains two surprising lapses from historical fact.

First, the suggestion that Darwin "lived before atoms and molecules had been discovered" is true only in the sense that the general public is usually unfamiliar with contemporary scientific concepts. Certainly scientists were acquainted with atoms and molecules. Reference to the *OED* shows that Paley, who wrote one of the texts set for Darwin's undergraduate degree at Cambridge, contrasted atoms with molecules in 1802 and that the modern sense of molecule was used two years later in *Philosophical Transactions*. Whewell used "atom" in its modern sense in 1837 and it is unlikely that these chemical terms were unfamiliar to the chemists who were beginning to synthesize organic molecules or to Whewell's friend and colleague Darwin, who was himself sent out of school to university in part because of the time he wasted on chemical experiments, according to his *Autobiography*.

Second, in one scientist's review of another's work it is odd to see him perpetuate the myth that the Islamic conquerors of Egypt burned the library of Alexandria, as the Ptolemaic library

had disappeared by the second-third century AD, centuries before the advent of the Arabs; the story of its burning appears to be post-Crusade or late Byzantine propaganda. The most detailed account appears six centuries after the Arab conquest in Bar Hebraeus' thirteenth-century *History*, which was given a wide currency by Pocock's 1639 translation appearing at a time when the recent suppression of Galileo's work made the rationalist-obscurantist controversies of the eleventh-thirteenth centuries which the library story illustrates topical. The story of the library burning is dismissed as a late invention by Gibbon in another work with which Darwin, if not your reviewer, would have been familiar.

ROBERT MILLER.  
American University of Beirut, Beirut, Lebanon.

## Joseph Roth

Sir, - I am sorry Gabriel Josipovici (Letters, May 6) in his comments on my review (April 22) of Joseph Roth's *Job* chose not to see the love and admiration I have for Roth. His use of the fairy-tale form, in particular, bracketing the harshest of realities, seems to me wonderfully ironic. As for *Job*, its "miracle" ending clearly went against the grain with Roth. To some commentators, it has carried so little conviction that they suspected him of sending it up! I don't go as far as they do, but an iconography of happiness consisting of a family snapshot and a drinks advertisement is either ambivalent or downright facile - a rare charge against Joseph Roth, and one which I bring with due sorrow and veneration.

On the other hand, if not having a half-declared interest in "modern rewriters of the Biblical Job story" to be prejudiced, then I must admit I am. As to Gabriel Josipovici's general point about the value of adverse criticism, his own has always interested me a great deal.

MICHAEL HOFMANN.  
11 Chaucer Road, Cambridge.

## Montaigne

Sir, - In her review of *Montaigne: Essays in Memory of Richard S. Tedlow*, edited by I. D. MacLennan and Ian Maclean (May 13), D. G. Coleman makes various assertions about Montaigne and offers in proof of them "the frequency with which he comes back to words like *obligement*, *bien*, *consanguinité* and *consuetudine*, *glozier* and *entreglozier*". According to R. E. Leake's *Concordance des Essais de Montaigne*, in a text of over a thousand pages Montaigne uses the words *bien* sixteen times, *glozier* three times, *obligement* twice, and *consanguinité*, *consuetudine* and *entreglozier* once each.

CAROL CLARK.  
Balliol College, Oxford.

## Information, please

For uncatalogued collections for a selected edition of the correspondence to be published by Yale University Press.

Jackson R. Bryer.  
Department of English, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742.

Shog Ristavelli: author of the twelfth-century Georgian epic poem *The Knight in the Panther (or Tiger) Skin*; present whereabouts of the fourteenth-century manuscript of the poem auctioned in London in the mid-1950s.

Nico Kiasashvili.  
13 Pavlov Street, Tbilisi 60, Georgia, USSR.

Charles Tennyson Turner (1808-1879), poet and priest, elder brother of Alfred, Lord Tennyson; information concerning the whereabouts, other than in Lincoln, of MSS, letters, photographs, etc. for a critical biography.

Roger Evans.  
2 Bowden Street, Kennington, London SE11 4DS.

## Author, Author

### Competition No 124

Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than June 17. A prize of £10 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date, or failing that the most nearly correct - in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration.

Entries, marked "Author, Author 124" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, 1 John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on June 24.

I drive through the streets, and I care not a d--n; The people they stare, and they ask who I am. And if I should chance to run over a cad, I can pay for the damage if ever so

So pleasant it is to have money, So pleasant it is to have money.

When she gave a dance she engaged three bands. And she entered the Ritz once walking on her hands. She drove round London in a crimson Rolls. "The soul of every party" - as if parties had souls.

Oh, Monal, the party's over now!

I say, "Le Roy, just how much are we owing?" Something I can't comprehend. The more we get the more we spend.

He only answers, "Let's get going. Le Roy, you're earning too much money now."

### Competition No 120

Winner: E. E. Duncan-Jones

Answers: 1 PS - To-morrow night I am going to see *Olelio*, an opera from our *Olelio*, and one of Rossini's best, it is said. It will be curious to see in Venice the Venetian story itself represented: besides to discover what they will make of Shakespeare in Music.

Lord Byron, letter to John Murray, February 20, 1818.

2 I talked of Music's gorgeous fane; I talked about Rossini. Hoped Ronzi would come back again.

And criticized Pacini. W. M. Praed, "My Partner".

3 Tooraloo, tooraloo, tooraloo, loo - Fiddled diddledi, diddledi di di; *Figaro* sit, *Figaro* git - *Figaro* quid, *Figaro* la! How he likes doing it - Ha, ha!

A. H. Clough, *Dipsychus*, part 1, scene 1.

4 "You are invited, but your children are parvenus and parvenues: will banish their Weltschmerz and cry heil to the linguistic offspring of the Volkswanderung de nos jours." *A Concise Dictionary of Foreign Expressions*, compiled by B. A. Phyllis (1977, Hodder and Stoughton, 22.95, 0.340 28174 X). Latin also: "and the factum and the fandum alike will exercise their fantasia in fantasies of foreign fandum, fanfaronade. The envious emir, epis with an equine of ephedra, ephedra: will be in rapport with the Broederbond, brandishing their bourgeois, bric-a-brac and bravura broderie, anglaise as they breakfast with bright on brandade de morue. Bratwurst, brisling and briches. Here is multum in parvo: a modus vivendi, a montage of mores: a bona fide and bon marché, bonbonnière of bonis mots. Every biased blagueur knows it makes bon sens."

5 GAINES CHANG is a lecturer in English Literature at the University of Edinburgh.

ALEX DE JONCK's most recent book, *The Life and Times of Grigori Rasputin*, was published last year.

J. B. DONNE is the translator of *Gargantua and Pantagruot*, 1980.

JOHN DUNN is a Fellow of King's College and Reader in Politics at the University of Cambridge.

TERRY EAGLETON's books include *The Reader of Charles*, 1982, and *Literary Theory: an Introduction*, 1983.

## Among this week's contributors

DAVID BELLOS is the editor and translator of Leo Spitzer's *Essays in Seventeenth Century French Literature*, 1983.

SIMON BLACKBURN's *Reason and Prediction* was published in 1973.

PHILIP BRADY is Reader in German at Birkbeck College, London.

VICTOR BRÖMBERT is the Henry Putnam University Professor of Romance and Comparative Literature at Princeton University. He is currently completing a book on the novels of Victor Hugo.

J. A. BURROW is the author of *Medieval Writers and Their Work*, 1982.

PERRY BUTLER's *Pussy Rediscovered* will be published in July.

RICHARD CALVOCORESSI is a Research Assistant at the Tate Gallery. His *Margite* was published in 1979.

WILLIAM COLLINGS is a study of David Jones' *The Song of Songs*, was published last year.

GAINES CHANG is a lecturer in English Literature at the University of Edinburgh.

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CYRIL EHRLICH is Professor of Economic and Social History at Queen's University, Belfast.

HILDA R. ELLIS DAVIDSON is a Fellow of Lucy Cavendish College, Cambridge. A revised edition of her *Scandinavian Mythology* was published last year.

BRIAN FOTHERGILL's books include *Beckford of Fonthill*, 1979.

CELIA HAWKSWORTH is a lecturer in Serbo-Croat at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University of London.

ROBERT HEWISON's *In Anger: Culture in the Cold War 1945-1960</*



# The critic's new clothes

Terry Eagleton

ELIZABETH W. BRUSS

*Beautiful Theories: The Spectacle of Discourse in Contemporary Criticism*  
519pp. Johns Hopkins University Press. £18.75.  
0 8018 2670 5

In the current heated contentions between literary theorists and literary humanists, almost nobody has paused to raise the inquisitive, childlike question: "Where does literary theory come from?" There are several reasons for this silence. To raise such a question is to engage in what one might call "metatheory": theorizing about theory itself, and for the literary humanists this would be to compound confusion, redouble the error, recount a tedious tale about tedium. Literary theorists themselves have largely ignored the issue for rather more complex reasons: partly because it smacks of a despised "origin", partly because metatheories are not currently in fashion, but mainly because most intellectual movements, like most people, are mercifully blind to their own conditions of possibility. In a common Oedipal fantasy, theories tend to dream that they are their own progenitors; to acknowledge that one had an origin is to admit that one may have an end. Literary theory, however, now seems to have proliferated to a point - marked by Elizabeth Bruss's excellent study - where such self-reflection has become possible. Where, then, did it come from?

It came, in a word, from the political

turmoil of the 1960s. Contemporary literary theory was born in response to a deep-seated social crisis which, unusually, found its focus in the academic institution. Palpably complicated by technocracy and military violence, the academics proved unable to cope with an increasingly heterogeneous, sceptical, democratically-minded student population newly conscious of the credibility gap between traditional scholarship and a mass culture. Theory, as Elizabeth Bruss points out, tends to arise when an intellectual enterprise loses its customary justifications and needs to generate a new set of acceptable questions. In this sense, the sudden explosion of literary theory is at one with the historical crisis of liberal humanism; structuralism and the student movement were the prodigal children of the same disenchanted father. The informal, spontaneous consensus of values which sustained the cloistered particularism of American New Criticism, or the shambolic empiricism of its English counterparts, could no longer survive unexamined in a period of disruptive cultural change; it was becoming apparent that, as Keynes once remarked, those who thought they could dispense with theory were simply in the grip of an older one. Fewer students were prepared to revere the traditional authority of critical judgments, given the political quietism they implied, the socially pariahs from which they were launched, and the blantly intuitive impulses which shaped them. Fewer students, too, were ready to acknowledge traditional literature as a transcendental object, in a world where

both mass culture and avant-garde art were busy undermining such received aesthetic categories. In literary studies, as in such cognate areas as the social sciences, scholarly objectivity could no longer pass itself off as ideologically virginal or institutionally neutral; and structuralism, with its powerful demystification of the "natural", provided a possible alternative. It was becoming clear, in short, that literary humanism was exempt from the embarrassments of theory only because its profoundly partisan values had, over the generations, become stealthily "naturalized"; once history exposed such values to challenge, their drab protective colouring of common sense proved more of a liability than a defence.

There are other reasons, less emphasized by Bruss, why literary theory gained ground so rapidly. For one thing, its richness, versatility and ambivalence proved capable of stimulating good students, as talk about spontaneity or spontaneous creative life on the whole did not. This simple truth has never quite been grasped by conventional critics, for whom general concepts are intrinsically impoverished, remote from the heady flavour of sensations or the delicious gristiness of discrete facts. "Reduction and abstraction", as Elizabeth Bruss reminds us, "are no less capacities of the imagination... than the celebration of particularity and plenitude." The young are often less anti-intellectual than their teachers because they can afford such luxury: in a world of mass media, unemployment, nuclear armaments

and academic "disinterestedness" they can no longer easily assume that literary criticism is intuitively justifiable, and casting an eye over some intuitively based criticism, one can see their point. How could they not be attracted by a body of thought which offers to combine the rigour of scholarship with the relevance of criticism? The literary academy has always been riven by a contradiction between these ill-assorted pursuits, caught on the hop between a reputable but socially marginal professionalism and a socially concerned but disastrously amateur moralism. In posing a range of questions at once technical and fundamental, literary theory offers a kind of solution to this demoralizing double bind.

The title of Bruss's book, provocatively coupling the aesthetic with the conceptual, gives a clue to its dominant theme. Few recent literary-theoretical claims have evoked more indignant snorts than the suggestion that the frontier between "creative" and "critical" writing may not after all be entirely impregnable - that criticism is a literary genre, just as self-scrutinizing modernist texts are a form of criticism. Critics are expected to write useably, not beautifully; the tailor should be discreetly clad, not found pouncing around in his clients' evening dress. Literary theory may be just tolerable if it serves as a humbly self-effacing handmaiden to literature; "The History and Theory of Literary Criticism in its application to English Literature", reads the title of a paper in the Oxford English School, squirming with anxious anticipations of anarchy and "irrelevance". Bruss, therefore, chooses to write on four critics -

William Gass, Susan Sontag, Robert Barthes and Harold Bloom - whose carefully policed borders between writing, in a set of elegant, dogmatic meditations, deconstruct Jameson's work between exegetical critique, she deplores these authors' "aesthetic" and "theoretical" odds with the adventurousness of the case. She writes excellently on Sontag's *On Photography* and Barthes's *Metaphor*, and what she lacks in originality on the over-ambitious Barthes is well balanced by a brilliant severe study of Bloom's "nostalgia power", his "powerful attraction for the idea of solipsism and the meaninglessness".

*Beautiful Theories*, as that last quotation suggests, is by no means an unreserved celebration of the last reach-me-down Parisian fashion. Bruss wishes to alert critical practitioners to the "penetrating pleasure" in the starkness of a conceptual design, she is also well versed in the philosophy of science to some Bloom's desperate intellectual aestheticism with a modest defence of critical objectivity and a rigorous rehearsal of its theoretical protocols and conditions. Her eloquent, posthumous book is important enough in its own right; but it is also a significant straw in the wind which now bending literary theory, after a preliminary jockeying for position, examines the exact sort of historical necessary phenomenon that it is.

STENDHAL

*Oeuvres Intimes: Tome 2*  
Edited by V. del Litto  
177pp. Paris: Gallimard. 260fr.  
20701 09453

*De l'Amour*  
Edited by V. del Litto  
564pp. Paris: Gallimard.

*Stendhal e Milano*  
Atti del 14° Congresso Internazionale Stendhaliano  
Two volumes, 499pp. and 969pp.  
Florence: Leo S. Olshki

KURT RINGER

*L'Am e la page*  
Trois essais sur Stendhal  
112pp. Arant: Editions du Grand Chêne. Swfr. 20.

MICHEL GUÉRIN

*La politique de Stendhal*  
261pp. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France. 75fr.  
213 037378 X

*Stendhaliens et Belyistes* - devotees of the work and admirers of the man - celebrate this year the 200th anniversary of Henri Beyle/Stendhal's birth. His readers, a "happy few" at first, have become the countless many. Unsuccessful in his lifetime, Stendhal consoled himself by saying that a book was like a lottery ticket: his time would come - in 1880, or perhaps in 1935. He has won his wager, a victory in which he only half-heartedly believed. Out of time, if not out of touch with his contemporaries, who were not prepared to appreciate his peculiar brand of ironic romanticism, he found responsive readers in our *ère du soupçon*, an era of scepticism, self-conscious enthusiasm and hidden nostalgia.

It is fitting that the second volume of the *Oeuvres Intimes* in the Pléiade edition has come out just in time for the bicentennial celebration. Its tireless editor, Victor del Litto, the animating spirit of the Stendhal Club, thus continues to devote himself with remarkable zeal and expertise to what has grown over the years into a near cult. The second volume of the *Oeuvres Intimes* is particularly valuable, for it contains, in addition to diary notes and fascinating personal documents, the two major autobiographical texts, *Souvenirs d'Égoïsme* and *Vie de Henry Brulard*, the latter especially, covering the early years in Grenoble, is a masterpiece of ironic self-search and self-creation, in which the myth of childhood is intimately related to the liberating joy of writing.

Joy is precisely the word. Stendhal's tastes, opinions and attitudes, appealingly provocative as they may be, provide only a surface titillation. What engages the reader is a love for what literature reveals and what it replaces. Reading the self and weaving Stendhal's meditation at the very heart of reality compete in urgency. In his earliest letters, Stendhal comments on the fever that goes with the physical act of aligning words on a page, complaining that his pen, always too slow, falls behind, his words, his thoughts. His handwriting became increasingly illegible. Fever seems indeed to have accompanied all his compositions. *La Chartreuse de Parme* was completed in seven weeks. At times, the excitement was too overpowering, interrupting the flow of the narrative, as at the end of *Vie de Henry Brulard*, which remains suspended, as it were, in mid-sentence.

Reading Stendhal is an exercise in agility and discontinuity. To qualify as one of the "happy few", one must be able to follow the intricacies of a style which communicates, through ironic allusions, ellipses and semantic initiations, the *vibrato* dear to Stendhal. It is a style that provokes and latters the reader, compelling him to become the accomplice of narrative difficulties. A passionate lover of opera, he easily moved to tears by its un sentimental combination of laughter and tenderness. Stendhal himself exploits the resources of the *reclativo* - the *tractato* of mental assoc-

ations and of reverie, the disjunctions of the narrative flow. The illusion of spontaneity protects and enigmatizes the lyrical moments - the moments of greatest vulnerability.

More sharply perhaps than any other nineteenth-century novelist, Stendhal helps us become aware of the problematic nature of the modern novel. His work illustrates the ironic tensions between fiction and reality, between poetic statement and referential fact. The claims of realism - the famous image of the mirror on the highway - are in themselves consistently ironic. The interwings of autobiography and the heuristic lie of fiction-making are in his case particularly complex. In *Souvenirs d'Égoïsme* and *Vie de Henry Brulard*, Stendhal shows us what it means to play with the possible directions of one's life, what it means to treat oneself as a character - multiplying the self in order to take stock of it, surprising oneself in the act of writing, confusing chronology in order to apprehend the effect of time, deceiving in order to invent the truth.

To invent means to find. The writer's quest implies the urge to discover a personal voice that was not there to begin with. Stendhal knows that nothing is more elusive than sincerity. "How many precautions one must take in order not to lie!" he writes at the beginning of *Henry Brulard*. Indeed, how many twists and turns, how many oblique manoeuvres characterize his writings! Sincerely, he felt, needed a mask - not to hide, but to be. How to say that which is nameless; how to fill the gaps - Stendhal called them "les trous" - which memory and imagination need in order to bring into being any truth? Not lightly does he call blasphemous the desire to speak of that which matters most.

The real subject, Stendhal knows, remains the unspeakable. Negative images take over. Preterition, much like understatement, is one of his favourite devices. Merely to evoke the achievement in - his eyes - Direct narration of deep emotions seems to him doomed to failure. Towards the end of *Henry Brulard*, as he tries in vain to recapture the inebriating discovery of Milan, he resorts to a striking image: one cannot see clearly the part of the sky closest to the sun. He repeatedly invokes the *pudeur* of writing. *Henry Brulard* ends with a moving and eloquent refusal to translate into words the ineffable quality of experience. "On n'apporte pas de tendres sentiments par descriptif, on les traduit par l'émotion." Elsewhere he speaks of the silence of happiness. At the beginning of *Souvenirs d'Égoïsme*, he decides to "skip" the happy moments for fear of profaning them. Yet, by his own account, his whole life as a writer was a struggle to translate into legible signs the "music" of his soul.

The joys of reverie and love seem to him, however, to elude any effort to set them down. They remain, as he puts it, *innommables*. This insistence on an impossible musical notation situates Stendhal's meditation at the very frontier of literature. Unlike Flaubert or Hugo, who place the reader securely inside the monument, if not the mausoleum, Stendhal leads us, that precariously, to the threshold of his thoughts. His handwriting became increasingly illegible. Fever seems indeed to have accompanied all his compositions. *La Chartreuse de Parme* was completed in seven weeks. At times, the excitement was too overpowering, interrupting the flow of the narrative, as at the end of *Vie de Henry Brulard*, which remains suspended, as it were, in mid-sentence.

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## Victor Brombert

Writing, for Stendhal, fills a tragic void. In the act of tracing words on a page, the novelist, no less than the autobiographer, discovers those essential fragments with which he restores the largely effaced fresco of his memory. This restorative process, this filling-in of the *blancs*, is his victory over death. For unlike Flaubert, who feels impelled to say no to his carnal self ("Arrière la guenille!"), unlike Hugo, who believes that the great writer is by definition posthumous ("having been, they are"), Stendhal refuses to espouse death. His vocation is neither monastic nor sacerdotal. He does not have the slightest inclination to belong to the chivalry of Nothingness. Negativity holds no seductive charm for him. He belongs rather to the spiritual family of those who - like Ariosto, La Fontaine, Mozart or Pushkin - know what it means to smile with sadness, even with despair, yet who remain attached to life and would gladly begin all over again.

That is also why Stendhal continues to have faith in an exchange between living and telling, in a shuttle without ultimate priorities between life and art. There is both modesty and courage in this oscillation, this double allegiance. Literature may be a passionate escape, never a substitute. Until his sudden death at the age of fifty-nine, when an apopleptic seizure struck him down on a Paris sidewalk (he was at work on a new novel, *Lamelle*), Stendhal knew that he could only write by being active, by remaining a joyfully subversive activity which allowed him to praise that very life which literature would deny or replace.

Studies published to coincide with the bicentennial tend to stress the intimate Stendhal, rather than the narrative artist, the creator of characters, or the encorder of hidden meanings. Biography seems to be back to one form or another. Michel Guérin's briskly written *La Politique de Stendhal* demonstrates that even his politics are rooted in the libido, while Kurt Ringer's *L'Am e la page* is made up of three essays, each of which openly declares its concern with the temperament of the writer: "L'Année d'Angélique", "Images du bonheur", "The Pleasure of Writing". *Stendhal e Milano*, a collection of over sixty papers read at the fourteenth Stendhal Congress and largely focused on Stendhal's personal relationship with a city that provided his greatest musical pleasures and his sharpest pangs of love. In more ways than one, Milan remained for Stendhal the ideal locus of an emotional and cultural apprenticeship.

Yet the opening pages of *Vie de Henry Brulard* are associated not with Milan, but with Rome. In this wistful exordium, the glance of the narrator, from atop the Janiculum, surveys all at once the panorama of the "eternal" city and the panorama of his life. The vision of Rome is symbolic and ironic: the time-schemes of private story and history are telescoped. Stendhal delights in receding the names of landmarks and monuments, as he counts the years of his life and discovers that he has reached the age of fifty. The Pincio, San Pietro, in Montorio, the Villa Aldobrandini, Santa Maria Maggiore, the Arminian Forum, the Colosseum, the Pantheon, the joy of naming blends with the pleasure of telling. The autobiographer knows from the outset that autobiography is fiction. Yet the view from the hill overlooking ancient and modern Rome gives the illusion that his own time and the time of history coincide. In these moving pages, mythopoetic understatement and heuristic self-probing bring together private reminiscences, lyrical meditations, the awareness of ageing and death, in what refuses to become a posthumous perspective.

Stendhal teaches his reader that the will to know the self is also the will to construct the self, and that this self remains co-substantial with the act of writing. These dynamics of the true creation may explain why the true admirers of *Henry Brulard*, for them Stendhal is a master in the difficult, the elusive quest for sincerity. Paradox is at the heart of *Beyleisme*. Stendhal's

sallies are deceptive. He is the lucid dreamer, the tender cynic, the passionate ironist. For *Beyleisme* - a word coined by Stendhal himself - means the art of masking a self-consciousness devoid of sentimentality, a code of desire rather than gratification, a capacity for joy rooted in the awareness of vulnerability. Stendhal's pursuit of happiness - the famous *chasse du bonheur* - has little to do with the superficial titillations of the senses. As Léon Blum pointed out long ago, in a book that remains one of the finest on Stendhal, Stendhal's notion of happiness engages the moral being; it cannot exist where conscience rebels.

The aristocracy of the soul is a notion that owes much to Rousseau. That, too, had to be masked. The boy Henri Beyle had devoured *La Nouvelle Héloïse*. The adolescent discovered the *Idéologues* (Destutt de Tracy, Lancelotti, Cabanis), and liked to think that they would cure him of his "exaltation à la Rousseau". The *Idéologues* taught him techniques of rational analysis; they inspired him with a taste for classifications, a belief in the combined virtues of psychology and physiology, a faith in the strategic use of the human will. But their lesson was illusory, and he knew it. Rousseau remained present, though repressed.

In his novels, some of the most delicate moments, in terms of imagery and rhythm, seem to come straight out of Rousseau's *Confessions* or *Révères*. But they remain precisely moments, framed by ironic authorial intrusions and disclaimers. Rousseau is particularly alive in *Henry Brulard*. The first impression of the Lake of Geneva, on his way to Italy with Napoleon's army, is experienced as a Rousseauistic pilgrimage ("ivre de bonheur de la lecture de *La Nouvelle Héloïse*"). And did he not state, some twenty years before *Henry Brulard*, that he would like to "translate" the *Confessions* into his own style?

The self-conscious repression of Rousseau is meant to be self-revealing. It is for Stendhal a way of becoming his own private theatre, the actor, yearning to be in control of his own scenario, increasingly tempted by the allurements of self-paternity. The creation of pseudonyms - and writing is for Stendhal a steady exercise in pseudonymity - is doubtless a way of

dismissing the father. But the private theatre also allows him to play out a masquerade which converts self-affirmation into the greater delights of self-effacement. Stendhal's fiction sings not of conquests, but of accepting to be love's willing dupe. "Le bonheur d'être dupe" is an expression which echoes throughout his work. *De l'Amour* unequivocally sets up Saint-Preux's defeats (Rousseau again!) as far more satisfying than the countless victories of Don Juan, for whom seduction necessarily remains a rather banal affair.

The mask protects and affirms the lyrical impulse. We are touching here on the pervasive themes of dissimulation and disguise. "I would wear a mask with pleasure. I would change my name with joy," he writes in *Souvenirs d'Égoïsme*. From the start, there is the desire to remain invisible to the glance of the other. "Ne pas être deviné" is the watchword. In the salons of Paris, Henri Beyle paraded as a cynic, allowing his mind to become the buffoon of his soul. But to dissemble means to play a role, to become another. "I am accustomed to appear the opposite of what I really am." Trying out masks, creating fictional characters, discovering and revealing oneself by flirting with what one is not - these are all part of a creative mental choreography.

Whatever is deep, says Nietzsche, loves the mask. Is it surprising that Stendhal was fascinated not only with dissembling, but with hypocrisy? The notion of a "depth" to be hidden casts some light on his life-long attraction to prison images, on the importance of happy incarceration in his novels. Julien and Fabrice discover their inner life within prison walls. In guot they conceal the very joy of concealment. From behind his prison walls, the prisoner devises a system of communication. Fabrice's happiness in the Farnese tower, as he reconstitutes alphabets and sends coded messages, is emblematic of a language with which to encode his hidden interiority.

There is nothing frivolous about Stendhal's brand of hedonism. This incorrigible tourist in search of sensations, this lonely and restless figure who refuses to be satisfied, is not after superficial excitement. He is the cult of the privileged moment. ("Pour

## Metaphors without end

Cairns Craig

VINCENT B. LEITCH

*Deconstructive Criticism: An advanced introduction*  
290pp. Hutchinson. £15 (paperback, £5.35).  
0 09 150690 5

JONATHAN CULLER

*On Deconstruction: Theory and criticism after Structuralism*  
307pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £16.95 (paperback, £6.95).  
0 7100 9502 3

"No longer busy being both, deconstruction is busy dying." So Vincent B. Leitch remarks in an appendix to his *Deconstructive Criticism: An advanced introduction*. For those who might heave a sigh of relief at being spared the effort of wrestling with an introduction, advanced or otherwise (let alone the real thing), Leitch also threatens us with "more extreme plans of liberation" - "wild writing". In the likely event that the impetus of philosophically based criticism won't just wither away, but will seed before its death a "post-deconstruction", Leitch's study, like Jonathan Culler's *On Deconstruction: Theory and criticism after Structuralism*, may be expected to provoke a new round of the debate over deconstruction. Leitch places Derrida's work in a broad spectrum of structuralist and phenomenological debate, and shows how his basic terms evolve as a critique of the weaknesses of his predecessors' positions. Culler sticks closer to Derrida's own texts and tries to display the intertwining of the main themes as a coherent development from the initial perception that meaning is a function of "difference" - "the noise that is present when one says but is inhibited by the traces of forms one is not uttering" - through the critique of all western thought as "logocentric", as the desire for meaning to be an immediate "presence", to the analysis of texts in that problematic double movement in which "logocentric positions contain their own undoing and, on the other hand, the denial of logocentrism is carried out in logocentric terms". One of the virtues both books share is that they demolish the sense, so often given by the opponents of deconstruction, that it is a monolithic movement or a mass-production line turning out machines for processing texts. The life of deconstruction, however much it may have taken its impetus from Derrida, has been in the variety of ways in which

part of a generally applicable theory. Derrida might deny the distinction but deconstruction has only been able to develop as a movement because there are transferable procedures of investigation - even if their name-tags keep changing. Leitch places Derrida's work in a broad spectrum of structuralist and phenomenological debate, and shows how his basic terms evolve as a critique of the weaknesses of his predecessors' positions. Culler sticks closer to Derrida's own texts and tries to display the intertwining of the main themes as a coherent development from the initial perception that meaning is a function of "difference" - "the noise that is present when one says but is inhibited by the traces of forms one is not uttering" - through the critique of all western thought as "logocentric", as the desire for meaning to be an immediate "presence", to the analysis of texts in that problematic double movement in which "logocentric positions contain their own undoing and, on the other hand, the denial of logocentrism is carried out in logocentric terms". One of the virtues both books share is that they demolish the sense, so often given by the opponents of deconstruction, that it is a monolithic movement or a mass-production line turning out machines for processing texts. The life of deconstruction, however much it may have taken its impetus from Derrida, has been in the variety of ways in which

the commentators on any deconstructive text - is always confronted with the irony of trying to expound the "meaning" of a work whose burden is that every text contains its own negation and that every reading of a work (even if possible at all) is a misreading. Despite the overlaps in their themes, Culler and Leitch adopt very different tactics in dealing with the ambiguity of their own relation to writers whose works they portray. Culler is liquid and thorough, can move into and out of other people's arguments without losing the sense of his own voice and argument, and can manage to do so equally at home with Freudianism, feminism, and traditional literary criticism. His wide reading of contemporary criticism and theory is not just displayed, but is marshalled as an argument, an argument about the

relevance of deconstruction to the problem of reading as it has developed out of non-deconstructive styles of criticism. Many might feel that deconstruction has too many faults to tally much of the guilt if reading has become problematic. But Culler presents Derrida's work as the explanation of why we had to end up in a position in which "one cannot take for granted the unity and identity of one's reading strategies and experiences". Feminist, hermeneutic and reader-response analyses of how we read literary works have shown how self-serving is our central assumption that "the outcome of reading is always knowledge": we have indulged in a "story" of how we read that does not correspond to the reality either of critical or of common reading. Deconstruction for Culler does not solve this problem, but offers us ways of not submitting to false solutions.

Yet Culler's project does not end up being as radical as, initially, he leads us to expect: his presentation of the outcome of a Derridean vision of the outcome of any text and the non-unitary reading experience comes much closer to "traditional" Brice-American criticism than to some Continental post-structuralism.

Deconstruction shatters structuralism's "faith in reason" by revealing the uncanny irrationality of texts and their ability to confute or subvert every system or position. Deconstruction, by revealing the impossibility of any science of discourse and returns critical inquiry to the task of interpretation. Instead of using literary works to develop a poetics of narrative, for example, the critic will study individual novels to see how they resist or subvert the logic of narrative. Research in the humanities, which structuralism attempted to enlist in broad, systematic projects, is now urged to return to close reading, to "the careful teasing out of warring forces of signification within the text".

If that final project sounds not too unlike the old New Criticism, but one who no longer expects to find the work involved in the critic's "faith" because Culler's rejection of deconstruction is what Leitch takes to

be characteristic of the American development of the theory, an "instrumentalizing" that "tends more and more to show up as a narrow method of practical literary analysis". *On Deconstruction* does exactly what Leitch argues is typical of American deconstructors, who "tend to start with Derrida and go forward from there, taking his critiques of condescending philosophies and literary theories as complete and definitive". Nowhere is this clearer than in Culler's own style of presentation: although he writes about Derrida's disruption of textual unity in works like *Glac* and comments on the seriousness of Derrida's playful use of etymologies, coinages and wilful conjunctions between words, he scrupulously eschews any imitation of this in his own writing. For many this will put Culler on the side of the angels - he is level-headed, judicious, intent on communicating with his reader - but what it means is that Culler's own text defuses some of what it attempts to expound.

Leitch's tactics are very different. Not that he is obscure or wayward, but he sometimes presents arguments in summary form as a series of numbered units, sometimes constructs a brace-brac of quotations; he resorts to mock-heroic invocations of myth and sometimes to a kind of knockabout force that emphasizes the play of personality in a criticism which is supposed to deny the authority of the writer's personality over his productions. There appears something of the different radiologist technician in Miller; the hermetic, sometimes arrogant head-surgeon in de Man, the distracted general practitioner in Riddell.

At the same time *Deconstructive Criticism* is a much more straightforward historical account than Culler's, and, not sharing Culler's desire to come to a conclusion about the problem of reading as it affects the practice of literary criticism and its teaching, it has a much broader angle of vision on the deconstructive enterprise. Thus we get more information about the different "schools" of deconstruction and a much more rigorous effort to describe the points of theoretical conflict that separate Hills Miller and de Man from Harold Bloom and Geoffrey Hartman, or the whole Yale school from the group connected with Riddell and the journal *Boundary 2*. Leitch also tries to

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un tel moment il faut la peine d'avoir vécu". His heroes discover the pleasures of reverie and memory: the exquisite nocturnal hours in the Vergy garden remembered by Julien in his cell; the enchanting evenings associated in Lucien Leuwen's mind with the sound of Mozartian horns. To be sure, Stendhal loves to slip midnight punch in salons where all the ladies have had lovers. He claims to be bored by "honest" women. But the true pleasures, he knows, are of a spiritual nature, and carry one to what he calls "le pays des idées".

If Stendhal denounces *l'esprit de système*, it is not for lack of seriousness, but because he instinctively rebels against all forms of hyperbole and pretension. If he refuses to carry his head like a Holy Sacrament (the image is his), it is because he has committed himself to a struggle against all forms of counterfeit. Such a course is not devoid of courage. The world, Stendhal feels, owes us nothing; we do not have the right, no matter what happens, to inflict our misery on others. This dignity of the *homme de bonne compagnie* owes much to Ancien Régime elegance which Stendhal, despite his "republican" sympathies, continued to miss all his life.

There is another form of courage which Stendhal's fictional imagination projects into a cult of energy. Julien Sorel is slender, almost frail; yet his concentrated inner strength is impressive. In *Rome, Naples et Florence*, Stendhal explains that the

kind of strength he admires can be found in an ant as well as in an elephant. This cult of energy, which Nietzsche found so appealing, informs Stendhal's passion for the Italy of the Renaissance. He does not tire of singing dithyrambs to the powerful individualism of heroic periods. Such admiration also implies a critique of contemporary society. Behind the cult of energy, individualism, and revolt, can be read a political lesson involving the diverse and often divergent meanings of the word freedom.

This lesson, too, remains paradoxical. Stendhal's passion for politics makes him watch the unfolding of contemporary history (the Revolution, the Empire, the Bourbon Restoration, the July Monarchy) as a fascinating dramatic spectacle. He joked, it is true, that politics in a novel were like a pistol shot in a concert-hall. Yet the political pistol shots can be heard throughout the pages of his books. It is as though he felt the desire to be inside history as well as the need to escape from it. Astride two centuries, having participated in the retreat from Moscow and known rapidly changing political régimes, he understood that the acceleration of events meant the tyranny of history. More keenly than any of his contemporaries, he sensed that the dialogue between the generations was becoming increasingly difficult, that the rule of ideologies made it almost impossible for fathers to understand their sons, and even for brothers to find

a common language. He knew moreover that the rule of ideologies was really the rule of the majority, of public opinion, of a despotic collectivity - anonymous tyranny *par excellence*.

This explains why the exceptional individual, and individualism, are so lovingly treated in Stendhal's writings. What is at stake is survival itself in the face of the great tides of history. Stendhal was quick to grasp that politics - especially the politics of freedom - were hardly compatible with the freedom of the individual; that it had become increasingly urgent to find ways of defending the human spirit against all deterministic pressures. So, too, in his novels did he find ways of subverting the pressures of plot and narrative authority.

How indeed was one to resist the tyrannies of history and politics if not through strategies of subversion? How was one to protect that which one holds dear, if not through the practice of *keimán* (defined by Gobineau, and in our time by Czesław Miłosz), the art of saying yes so as to continue thinking no, the dissident's art of survival? For open revolt has become ineffectual.

Needless to say, Stendhal is the first to recognize the risks of mental disguises and masquerades. The mask may adhere to the face. The lie can become chronic. But there is exhilaration and poetic potential in such inner freedom. In all his novels, Stendhal projects the dream of escape through the prison of privacy. His

characters readily convert their cell into a locus of meditation and freedom.

Quite remarkably for the time, this lesson in freedom extends to women as well. Madame de Rênal, Duchess Sanseverina, Lamie, represent a progressive declaration of independence. Ever since his childhood, Stendhal in fact dreamt of courageous, resolute, emancipated women. He conceived of their intellectual and sexual equality with men. To be sure, such notions of equality served hedonistic impulses. But they also served a sense of human dignity - a dignity always compromised, in Stendhal's view, so long as the education of women remained an instrument of oppression.

Ultimately, however, even feminine emancipation must be seen as part of the larger paradox of Stendhalian freedom. For along with in Sanseverina, there is the sequestered Clélia who, in her father's repressive fortress, enjoys the "freedom of the convent", helping to transform the Franche into the charterhouse of *La Chartreuse de Parme*. The prison metaphor remains central to the quest for freedom. It is the space of love and of writing, the privileged mental space where language and communication can be reinvented. Does Stendhal not compare the "animal named writer" to a silk-worm that has eaten its fill of mulberry leaves, and now needs to climb and weave its silken prison? It is in this prison-house of words that Stendhal found his true freedom.

## Coproduced

David Bellos

MARY SUSAN MCCARTHY

Balzac and His Reader: A Study of the Creation of Meaning in *La Comédie humaine*  
155pp. University of Missouri Press  
£13.50.  
0 8262 0378 7

Balzac (more usually, "the Balzacian novel") used to be the ubiquitous whipping-boy of literary theory, the mythical location of "naïve realism", and texts were held to be intertextual direct proportion to their distance from this last. But as the lights went out on the house of structuralism, a new era dawned for the *Comédie humaine*. Alongside the continuing scholarly work of specialists, there has arisen, in the past decade, a new kind of writing in which Balzac ("the Balzacian novel") serves to support and to demonstrate different theoretical standpoints in literary study. Barthes, of fashion, or both have transformed Balzac from a negative cultural reference into a positive and prestigious object of critical debate.

Mary Susan McCarthy's *Balzac and His Reader* is one of the by-products of this new status - not a particularly harmful by-product, but of no real use to anyone either. The "reader" she refers to is not, of course, any historical person or group, but a theoretical instance created by the text, and called upon to "coproduce" the meaning of the novel or story in question. After a brief sketch of method in which the names of Wolfgang Iser, David Bleich and Norman Holland are invoked, Ms McCarthy gets down to showing how the reader's "coproduction" is tightly controlled by the author's handling of four "strategies" - metaphor, description, narrative structure and the device of the reappearing characters. The jargon of "reading" theory therefore acts in this book as a

ineffective cover for a very traditional pedagogic exercise: the construction of the critic's mastery over the text by analysis of the creator's control of the readerly text. The traditional exercise would in the past have been carried out on a rather broader front than this is here: one is hardly convinced of Ms McCarthy's control of the *Comédie humaine* when the only evidence she provides is an extended metaphor from *Le Père Goriot*, a description from *La Recherche de l'absolu*, the narrative of *La Grande Breteche* and two reappearing characters from *Le Père Goriot*.

The whole question of Balzac's control of the reader is however a serious study, with or without the help of "reader-oriented" theories of criticism. It was raised, aggressively, in the first major piece of criticism devoted to Balzac, Sainte-Beuve's 1834 review of *La Recherche de l'absolu*; Rainer Warning has made some perceptive remarks on the paradoxical manipulation of the reader in the opening pages of *Goriot*; and the prefaces and dedications of the north in their various additions also contain powerful and contradictory signals to the reader. Given what is known about the reception of Balzac's novels, it would be unwise to assume that the novelist succeeded in controlling the meanings "coproduced" by his readers, except in so far as he succeeded in provoking doubt about the meanings and the manner of their construction. The current debate concerns the authenticity of such doubts - whether Balzac's *opacité*, as Doubt does, with areas of moral and philosophical subsidence, or whether his seductions and aggressions are plays on the surface only, leaving the moral ground untouched. The one assumption on which the debate cannot be based, and the one on which Ms McCarthy's unfortunately biased and brief essays are based, is that the huge and massive mass of the *Comédie humaine* is simple entertainment over which a final "mastery" can be gained by the correct understanding of the author's strategies. If that assumption were granted, one would be forced to ask why no one had noticed it before.

## POETRY

### Getting near the earth

Tim Dooley

PATRICIA BEER

The Life of the Land  
47pp. Hutchinson. £3.95.  
0 09 157071 4

JENNY JOSEPH

Beyond Descartes  
59pp. Secker and Warburg. £5.50.  
0 456 22801 7

Patricia Beer's latest collection, *The Life of the Land*, has on its cover a sepia-toned photograph of the classic English landscape: a lightly wooded valley cradling neat geometric fields, a handful of houses and sheep in the foreground. The picture evokes a sentimental view of the countryside as a place of comfort and continuity which Patricia Beer's elegant and rational poems do their best to subvert. In "Farmhouse Time", for example, the four-hundred-year history of a farmhouse gives rise not to a catalogue of mortality: Men live much longer now than their sheep do. Yet all the time - once more, once less - The passing bell seems to be ringing. At night all our ghosts Stand in the walls singing.

Each wind pulls straws From the descendant Of the first-thatch. The cat, fed indoors nowadays, Laps like a watch.

The clock on the night storage heating Ticks like a taxi waiting. Several of the poems in this volume explore a tension between attachment to place and specifically personal values. In "The Emigrant", the Puritan Roger Conant "born in Budleigh, Devon", resolves the conflict between

his desire to die in his place of birth and his unwillingness to abandon the religious tolerance he has found in the New World, by asking his fellow-Americans to re-name their town Budleigh. "The Simple Life", an account of the marriage of C. R. and Janet Ashbee, weighs the rural idylls of Arts-and-Crafts idealism against a more conventional family life, and retains a cautious ambivalence about the attractions of both:

The Simple Life is inside You, she said, wanting babies. It is not William Morris Patterns, nor gleaming hobbles, Nor that apprentice who died At twenty, as the cherry Formed all along the road.

Marry me, said his wife. Hard soap and flabby candles And Edward Carpenter's Aggressive homemade sandals Vanished. A town roared And four luminous daughters Shut out the Simple Life.

The opposition between values rooted in landscape and in individual human lives is made explicit in the title poem, where the pilot of a crashing plane deliberately chooses to destroy "trees ... cattle, sheep" rather than the people of his home town:

from death He saved his people. Discarded The life of the land, and dropped.

If the attractive series of curves that make up the life of the land can contain another sort of life, what hope is there for a political stance that draws its strength from the historic struggles of those who worked the land? In "Blood will have Blood", describing a Blackpool conference singing the "Red Flag", Patricia Beer senses a politics of vengeance, a refuge of scoundrels. For her, national unity is the temporary product of crisis, something which may be drawn from a common response to the sinking of the Penlee lifeboat ("Lost") or the singing of Vera Lynn

"In wartime forty years ago" ("Some Sunny Day"). The land has no significance beyond that which the human mind or a momentary vision may lend.

The opening poems in Jenny Joseph's *Beyond Descartes* reveal a similar suspicion in the face of generalization. "The world is only in our sight", she writes (in "Descartes - you there?"), and relativistic notions affect the structure of some poems as well as providing their theme.

I stand again on the shore Where we stood and watched the waves. Or rather, since I write this I imagine us standing there.

So I sit, town-girl, and imagine Me standing by you on the shore But the vision not being a pea Me writing was only a thought.

Jenny Joseph's last two collections, *Rose in the Afternoon* and *The Thinking Heart*, were notable for their mixture of parable and realism. In this new volume, uncertainty feels a wry, riddling humour or a melancholy longing for "Meaning and manifestation" that are "knotted far away". There is a strong awareness of the vicariousness of much human experience. In "Living off other people - Welfare", the positive side of this, the enriching aspect of imaginative sympathy, is emphasized. By looking "into other people's rooms" one can capture some of the delight of others' lives without having to take on their responsibilities.

But the interdependence of human lives can have a dark side too. William Blake's symbolic figures, the *Prophets* and the *Devourer*, seem to haunt the extremely impressive, extraordinarily harsh visionary poems which make up the third and final section of *Beyond Descartes*. The "Man as cannibal" section of "Man as matter" is particularly memorable: its grotesque

images insisting on the connections between destruction and creation, exploitation and growth.

And see the healthy bursting prosperous man His muscled leg pushing the earth down. It is not beef supplies but, circling his veins

The lymph he pumps through her incestuous system. No wonder they thought up the body and blood of Christ.

See how the babe grows and the mother shrivels Five pulsing men and a little woman that bows Nearer the earth each day. And the new corn bursts Shouldering and splitting the rod and the husk blows empty

To be mashed in the mud. Individual images of suffering and deliberate cruelty, such as the child abuse and political torture evoked in "Untitled", are disturbing enough; but more chilling still is the feeling that runs through several of these poems that such evil is permanent. The soldier climbing a mountain "to fight Winter" in "Another old tale", symbolizes the recurrent struggle to improve the lot of an individual or a society. When he dies in the attempt, the soldier appears

no more significant than a "little speck of grit". He has only dreamed of "a state called Summer, a world thought human".

In the long title poem Jenny Joseph attempts to get beyond dreams to a "Clarity more than daylight / Clarity of the long slow stare". Her vision is again a desperate one:

As if all good Were only an opposition in face of danger A shaft brought out to highlight the cloud, and then

Ever a fading: - and she explicitly rejects the consolations that might conventionally be opposed to such a vision:

Salvation through human love and sacrifice A dead idea, and one that works in practice Only in very limited circumstances That do not have a bearing on these people.

Both *The Life of the Land* and *Beyond Descartes* exemplify a precise attention to patterns of feeling and thought. Together they demonstrate what seriously applied intelligence and stringent moral reasoning can still achieve in poetry.

## Taking licence

Mick Imlah

GAVIN EWART

More Little Ones  
63pp. Anvil Press. £3.50.  
85646 102 4

ALAN MARSHFIELD

The Elektra Poems  
77pp. Anvil Press. £3.95.  
0 85646 085 0

The second collection of Gavin Ewart's short pieces to emerge from the Anvil Press is full of surprises. Not the least of these is that so many of its contents have achieved publication. "Little

Ones" are the best of the best, and those that can be comfortably held in the head at one time; they are instant poems, semi-conscious secretions of habitual literary effort.

These are the little thoughts (often sexual) that pass through everybody's mind - while he or she is waiting for a train or at a bus stop, walking along the street or sitting in a pub expecting the arrival of a friend. Sometimes they turn out silly, sometimes they have (I think) poetic merit. It is up to the reader to decide.

As the preface to the first collection put it: This new collection of sixty-four pages, eighty-six poems, and only 513 lines, has taken four years to compile, though for all the evidence of selectiveness or revision it might have been done in four weeks, such is the spontaneous and inclusive character of the book. One of its several limericks wondrously ironically at an example of the author's traditional fastidiousness:

A remarkable poet is Graves - he throws out far more than he saves! Each time he's collected, two chunks are rejected!

It is this, that's the way he behaves! We are encouraged to draw a contrast with Ewart's own licentious behaviour. He uses the Anvil Press as a rather stylish substitute for the bin. It is hardly necessary to confirm his own expectations that some of these highbrow doodles will be found "silly" or simply bad - the floppy triolets, for example - while others pack almost the whole force of his famous nimble humour.

The funniest of the poems are splendidly rude. There is no more charming exponent of bad language (writing today, and his venom is always justly expelled. But the tone of the book is as varied as its technique, as is shown by a quick scan of its one-line poems. Beside the quirky ("A Possible Line of Kipling, Concerning George MacBeth: He's a gentleman of Scotland, living south") and the crudely minimal ("She's mean and full of minge-water") there is "The Death of a Mother" with its shock of pathos ("So pitiful and small, such skin and bone") and the unexpected epi-

sweep of "Resurrection": "On the Last Day the wrecks will surface all over the sea." (All of these, of course, are memorable, because there is only one line to remember.) Poems like "Divorced Women in Dormitory Towns" (twelve lines) and "Spring Song" (nine) are melancholy observations whose affective power belies their miniature scale. There is even an explicit yearning to vault littleness in the "Ambition" harboured for an unwritten poem: "I want to be / a statutory legend in its lifetime / built to outlast the twittering birdlike critics." The placing of this in an assortment of trivial successes and forgettable failures is a typically good joke.

Also from Anvil come the weighty *Elektra Poems* of Alan Marshfield - the first full collection of twenty years' work. Marshfield is another poet for whom sex is the central subject, but his language is told in a different sense. He avoids plain words and direct syntax with a monophony of imagery of unnatural invention whose effects are often obscure or ugly: a line like "Clothed in crease from new duck pants to smile" draws faint and ineffectual associations between uninteresting objects in crabbed and grotesque language. Some subjects resist this treatment more vigorously than others, and Marshfield makes sex look like one of them. The action of "Sleep, Silhouette", for example, is presented in verse which manages to be both over-elaborate and grossly predictable:

my ambassador fingers grow aware liquidity means use, meant readiness. I was not marginal: dealt close - scoring your prelude whisper - stung your red interior with singing pains; longer joys scattering then, until from crotch to chin our sweaty bodies held and we arrived, gyrating breast to breast

This dreadful passage is not, alas, the only thing of its kind. "To Suffer of Mortality" has a narrator who snouts around his girl-friend's body like a badger, to approve her rankest odours with his deplorably sensitive "olfactory entrances". A poem which sticks in the mind.

Better than these, though all but incomprehensible, is an Egyptian monologue, "Ta-hea Visits her Tomb". This shows its painstaking erudition through sentences of enigmatic, faintly comic brevity:

Leaping down to the last mastaba? If you must: Children, that's a canopic jar. No! "Love Story", the sequence of eight poems with which the book opens, is less mannered than most of it, and its sexual metaphysics have the base of a fully portrayed relationship on which to gather interest. The narrator's consideration of his use of a young girl ("dear duncie", he calls her) is undertaken with a robust suggestion of self-foisting.



## Waving at Marcel

Valerie Minogue

JACQUES BERSANI, MICHEL RAIMOND and JEAN YVES-TADIE (Editors)

Etudes proustiennes, IV: Proust et la critique anglo-saxonne  
344pp. Paris: Gallimard. 160fr.  
2 07 024828 3

DERWENT MAY

Proust  
85pp. Oxford University Press. £7.95 (paperback, £1.75).  
0 19 287612 0

Surveying the history of Proust's reception in England in the latest issue of the *Cahiers Marcel Proust*, Robert Gibson captures both the flavour and the variety of the critical controversies which the novel excited. Mary Douglas (née Robinson), in 1915, is the first listed English reviewer of Proust; and to Richard Aldington goes the honour of writing the first article of "real quality" in 1920. Among the early critics, John Middleton Murry is singled out here as the most perceptive. Katherine Mansfield, wrote in December 1921 that she and her husband had just spent two weeks living and breathing Proust, to the point where she felt her own possibilities foreclosed - a feeling deflected by Virginia Woolf. In 1922, when, after expressing her rapture, she wondered what could possibly be left to write, Murry represented England in the special issue of the *Novvelle Revue française* published in January 1923. After Proust's death, and, three days later, provided a long study of "Proust and Modern Consciousness" in *The Times Literary Supplement*. The

first commemorative volume of essays appeared in 1923 under the editorship of Scott-Moncrieff, whose *Swann's Way* had appeared in 1922. It was a mixture of praise and blame - Arnold Bennett censured Proust's interminably rambling sentences, while George Moore compared him to a man trying to plough a field with knitting-needles.

When Professor Gibson laments the passing of the era of "amateur" critics like these he will have many sympathizers, now that a dour academic criticism has largely taken over. But the history of Proust in English is also one of taste and fashion. One generation of critics favours the tracing of affinities (from Petronius to Dickens), another stresses the social chronicle, like Edmund Wilson, who saw Proust as both historian and symptom of a crumbling civilization.

The late Rebecca West, only a year or so after the war, called Proust "a great political novel", memorably dismissed much of the rest as "maunderings when eating a bun". D. H. Lawrence denounces Proust's infantile preoccupation with trivia, while Aldous Huxley's Anthony Bravis, in *Eyes in Gaze*, describes Proust as one who not only drinks but gorges with his bathwater. On the subject of homosexuality, in the early 1920s, even enthusiastic admirers fell back in dismay, while the reaction to Albertine ranges from exuberant boredom to outraged morality or charges of confusion and dementia. To Cyril Connolly goes Gibson's prize for being the most beastly to Proust; his *Horizon* editorial (in 1941) presents him as a pathological case: cruel, snobbish, indecisive, cowardly and verbose.

After 1949 comes the era of the professionals, on whose plentiful contributions Gibson limits himself to

a few brief comments. This survey is followed by five articles on Proust by British academics. Ninette Bailey provides a logical and convincing application of Philippe Hamon's concept of "closure" to *A la recherche*, while R. G. Vessey makes an ingenious but to my mind less convincing analysis of the role of the "pyramid" image. Richard Bales discusses the controversial status of *Le Temps retrouvé* as a reflection of Proust's aesthetics, and Allison Finch, an acknowledged expert on Proust's manuscripts, provides a well-documented and persuasive response to Feuillebar's suggestion that Proust had impoverished his novel by extensive cuts in the lyrical and descriptive passages. Margaret Mein suggestively outlines Proust's avian treatment of wings, flight and aviation. Philip Kolb (who else?) introduces more than thirty letters from Proust to his friends and family, and a selection of his drafts of "Le dernier avellane" from Proust's notebooks, with detailed commentary. There is also an updating of Rainer Warning's bibliography to cover the years 1975-77.

To pass from the *Cahiers* to Derwent May's Past Master volume is to move into a decisively English sphere, in which the literary editor of the *Listener*, himself a novelist, addresses himself primarily in the wake of Terence Kilmarth's revised translation; to new readers of Proust. It is an uneven study, both in style and content. Mr May's short, bald and at times almost aggressively simple sentences make a strange contrast with Proust's own rhythmic constructions: "After 1949 comes the era of the professionals, on whose plentiful contributions Gibson limits himself to

"What people who have not read it fail so often to realise is that it is a great comic novel" testifies abundantly to the existence of a purely notional "Proust" so obstinate that a critic must address himself to the "failures of realisation" of non-readers.

May gives a thumb-nail sketch of Proust's life and background, and then directs our attention to that "triumph over separateness" which characterizes the novel. A brief summary of criticism provides some instant landmarks, and thereafter the book addresses itself to most of the novel's major themes. To cover so much in this short space demands compression. Proust's characters are described as "consistent within themselves" (which does not mean predictable) in every aspect of their behaviour; this begs so many questions as to mislead, while a page on Baudelaire as precursor is a scramble in which quotations are wrong, misquoting and where a mis-translation of "flamant" as "flames" is reproduced without comment (*flamme* is used here in the sense of "penitence" or "flag"). It is at such moments that one senses May has made somewhat hasty raids on the available scholarship.

But he effectively distinguishes Marcel the narrator from Marcel the protagonist, and both from their creator. His book gives a good impression of the depth, the variety, the social and psychological perceptiveness, and the great comic verve of Proust's novel, stressing the way "we are led into moral self-awareness and self-criticism" by a means that is peculiar to the novel; and that represents its supreme moral power. As an "amateur" critic, Derwent May is not weighed down by erudition, but neither does he have quite the agility or accuracy of the expert.



# Intended to provoke

Philip Brady

BERTOLT BRECHT

Gedichte aus dem Nachlass  
Band 1, 1913-1932  
Band 2, 1933-1956

Edited by Herta Ramthun  
52700, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.

It is over thirty years since Max Frisch accorded Brecht the rank of a literary classic — a backhanded compliment, since classic to Frisch meant ineffectual. Frisch had a point — two points, in fact, for few would deny the ranking and none would deny that the world has indeed remained largely unaffected by Brecht's desire to provoke thoughts of change. But in those intervening thirty-odd years it is Brecht himself, or at least our picture of him, that has changed. At his death the bulk of his work was unpublished. He had been more seen and heard than read, associated more with the Berliner Ensemble's productions than with words on the page. Over the years the works have been printed — first, the plays and the writings on theatre, then some of the poetry. In 1967, eleven years after his death, a "collected" edition was published. This followed the so-called working-journal, the early diaries, the letters, the film-scripts and film-sketches. But now, to hazard a prediction, we have reached the end of the major surprises with two volumes containing over 700 poems and fragments of poems, of which the vast majority have never before been published.

It is appropriate that Brecht the poet, not the dramatist, has sprung this last and greatest surprise. As a dramatist, Brecht supplies guidance, states aims, prescribes techniques, attempts model-productions and, in helping actors and producers, helps his readers and audiences, even at the risk of arming them with the odd ready-made label. Brecht the poet, however, was committed to the notion that poetry needs no glosses. He can, indeed, be positively misleading: what looks, for instance, like a studied casualness towards his own poetry is at least in part the serious poet in flight from neo-romantic posturing.

But there are clues to his intentions: his stated preference for a "Basic German" in poetry, his admiration of the "marvellous concreteness" of Greek epigrams, his rejection of a poetry in which "associations were provoked rather than actual thoughts" — these, if they do not add up to a poetic, at least prepare us for that argumentative strain and the elliptical vividness in his later poetry. But they are still no more than clues. Moreover, when it came to the poems themselves, Brecht, who claimed to have found "new paths for certain of poetry's

social functions", was not unduly anxious to display his finds in public. He published very little of his vast output, and that little — collections carefully selected and strategically arranged — gave what now appears as an unnaturally clear and consistent outline to his growth as a poet. The bulk remained hidden from sight.

the blushing sort Brecht might well have blushed at the sixteen-year-old schoolboy penning patriotic fustian for the Augsburg papers — they loyally published it — hymning "this bitter but holy strife". But then that same schoolboy was within eighteen months attacking war and praising broad hips and bottoms swaying in the blue of

poem as "on the way from Augsburg to Timbuctoo" and, if he never quite left Augsburg, he also never quite reached Timbuctoo, preferring, it seems, to keep one eye on the exotic, the other on the earthly familiar (how convenient, for instance, that German allows him to rhyme "Kyrie Eleisons" with "bums"). "Vitalität" was the craze, its ethos summed up in lines such as How good a piss to piano-music. How blissful a poke in the wind-wild reeds.

The exuberance can quickly pall, but it is fascinating to see Brecht's developing distance and irony, controls which were to be so important later. He is adept at trimming the sensualist ethos down to a simple naughtiness:

But one time the talented  
Then got a child in rubber shoes  
A case unprecedent.

Any unsolicited visit to the poet's workshop is going to bring us face to face with all the brie-a-brac of false starts and rejected versions, and there are plenty of these here. Brecht was by nature a begetter of provisional designs and fragments, countless bits and pieces to be worked over later. Unfulfilled intentions are disclosed; we have, for instance, verses for a planned play on David, part of a projected cycle of poems on medical discoveries, lines for a version of the *Divine Comedy*, for a play with chorus called *The Truth Messenger*.

Sometimes, however, the intentions were fulfilled. We can now see what was discarded en route. There are, for instance, few more brilliantly sustained ironic attacks on tyranny and propaganda than the *German Satires* against Hitler which Brecht published in the late 1930s. The left-overs and trial-runs are revealing in themselves — the spiky forms are there, but not the vivid, witty twists of argument. Again, at the beginning of the 1930s, Brecht had published a quite different kind of cycle — ten bitter, matter-of-fact monologues urging naked self-interest in the dog-eat-dog world of the cities. The present volumes not only contain older poems which are, or could be, part of the same project, they also show how consistently Brecht was working in those years at a kind of pared-down verse language, risking a prosaic flatness as a means of provocation:

I am his enemy: he just  
Doesn't know him.  
I hate his job. I  
Don't help him. I earn I  
Live in his room, I  
Wear his clothes, I live  
On him.  
He will recognise me soon, he  
Will get rid of me. He will  
Move out.

The poem is undistinguished, but the compactness, the dandy manner, were to become almost second nature to Brecht during the 1930s. Now at least we can see the work involved.

Besides the discarded parts, however, there are new wholes to be found here. That is to say, there are cycles and sequences which can be read complete, or near-complete, for the first time. The Koloman-Wallack Cantata, a lengthy sequence of erotic poems in a spare, folksong idiom, celebrating an Austrian worker shot after leading violent political disturbances in 1934, has only been known through a nine-line fragment. Now the whole is available and, although it is as much simplistic as simple, it is unlike any other sequence by Brecht. The *Herrnburg Report*, a cantata written for a Youth Festival of Peace in 1954 and hitherto known mainly by ill-repute, turns out to have deserved that ill-repute — whether Brecht is alone responsible for the crude tub-thumping is, however, a question not raised by the editor, whose notes on this piece, as elsewhere, leave much unexplained.

And there is another cycle, more an interrupted work-in-progress perhaps, first referred to in September 1957 when Brecht revealed "to Helene Weigel in a letter that, when otherwise unprompted, he had taken to writing 'pornographic' sonnets. The results are too distanced by their technical virtuosity, too aware of the interplay of strict form and liberated content, simply too good to be anything like pornography," Brecht, when he is celebrating sex in sonnets, seems ultimately to be celebrating the sonnet almost as much as the sex.

The young tearaway had spoken up in 1920 for poems that knock out one or two of the listener's teeth. These lost, mislaid or for other reasons unpublished cannot knock out any teeth and are unlikely to do so now that they are finally let loose on a world which has — to recall Frisch again — made of Brecht a tame classic. In any case Brecht cooled down, and one of the great advantages of this edition is that we can watch him doing so. The coolness was never meant to spell innocuousness or neutrality, it was simply a better potential weapon than verbal upper-cuts. And it is another great advantage of this edition there can watch Brecht making poems weapons. The targets can be very varied indeed, but the pungency is constant. It is there at the end, thirty years before his death, Brecht's controlled with the decisions of the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party in 1956, took on Stalinists and fledgling anti-Stalinists at the same time in four argumentative little poems. And, less seriously, the pungency can be seen in the asides and the afterthoughts: in Zürich in 1948 Brecht wrote a sonnet entitled "Sonne und Sex". When it's over, your partner wields the birch-twigs and he ends: "You sweat the whole flock (the Gofficks) out of your bones. Underneath the last line he wrote 'Thomas Mann'."

The poem is undistinguished, but the compactness, the dandy manner, were to become almost second nature to Brecht during the 1930s. Now at least we can see the work involved.

## Lustily to war

George Holmes

MICHAEL PACKE

King Edward III  
Edited by L. C. B. Seaman  
318pp, Routledge and Kegan Paul.  
£12.95.  
0 7100 024 2

It is true that, as L. C. B. Seaman says in his preface to this book, which he edited and completed after the author's death in 1978, Edward III has been neglected by biographers. The reasons are obvious. His reign was very long and his personality appears to have been totally lacking in oddity or enigma. A man whose childhood ended when his homosexual father was brutally murdered by his unfaithful mother's friends ought to have been unbalanced in some way. Edward, however, died fifty, mostly glorious, years later the arms of an attractive mistress, and venerated by the whole nation. He was apparently and quite simply a highly successful king and therefore boringly uncomplicated when compared with, say, Richard II or Henry VIII. There is no recent biography. Michael Packe had the reasonable idea of supplying one.

Nevertheless, although Edward III as a personality has not excited great interest, there has been a considerable amount of relevant historical writing of

which Packe did not take sufficient notice. Perhaps the most massive contributions of the twentieth century are the third volume of T. F. Tout's *Chapters in the Administrative History of Medieval England* (1928), in which he substantially rewrote the domestic history of the reign, and G. L. Harriss's *King, Parliament and Public Finance in Medieval England* (1975). Neither of these appears in the bibliography, though many less useful works do. No one can understand the circumstances in which Edward acted without taking account of the institutions described in these books. Though he made good use of May McKisack's volume in the *Oxford History of England*, Packe's book is weak on that side. He has read the original chronicles, he has dipped into the record sources and embellished the narrative from a rather random collection of secondary works on relevant topics. What results is an unoriginal but lively narrative of the obvious events, with a bias towards the story of the campaigns in Scotland and France.

The book contains one piece of original research on an intriguing subject to which prominence is given. According to the contemporary French chronicler Jean Le Bel the story is mentioned in no English source — Edward III raped the Countess of Salisbury, the wife of one of his foremost comrades in arms, William Montague, Earl of Salisbury. Le Bel's story is that Edward fell in love with the

lady when he visited a castle held by her husband in the course of his wars with the Scots. The castle, it has been presumed, was Warke-on-Tweed and the encounter took place during the campaign of 1341. Edward then summoned the Earl and Countess to attend a tournament so that he could continue the acquaintance. There were tournaments in 1342. The rape is said to have taken place later in 1342 in the absence of the Earl from the country on an expedition to Brittany. On his return the Countess confessed to him. Heart-broken, he divided his lands with his wife and went abroad again to fight the Moors in Spain, where he died.

There are a number of elements in this story which make it demonstrably untrue as it stands. Warke is said to have been defended by a nephew of the Earl called William, who did not exist; the Countess is called Alice while in fact her name was Catherine; the Earl did not die in Spain. But there is enough true knowledge involved in the story to make one doubt whether it is totally imagined: the Earl did have a castle on the Scots border, he did later go crusading in Spain and so on. Antonia Gransden, who investigated the matter in a penetrating short article published in the *English Historical Review* in 1972, concluded that it should probably be placed in the category of French war propaganda designed to brand the English as unchivalrous aggressors, to which *The Vows of the*

*Heron* belongs. She also suggested, interestingly, that the structure of the story might owe something to a knowledge of Livy's account of the rape of Lucretia. Packe seems to have missed Dr Gransden's article, which remains the best account of the matter, but he has one suggestion of his own to make. The Earl of Salisbury had a brother Edward Montague whose wife was called Alice. She was of a suitable age in the 1340s. Her life ended in 1351 in very peculiar circumstances: she died, according to an indictment which survives, as a result of being beaten by her husband, who around the same period was also involved in other disreputable episodes of brigandage but was later pardoned and resumed the normal life of a member of the lesser nobility. Packe suggests that the king's victim was this Alice Montague, that the affair was hushed up and that Le Bel reports a garbled version of the story with truth in it.

Though he draws our attention to an interesting and perplexing case of noble mores in Edward Montague, the probability, alas, is that the rape story was invented and that King Edward can be convicted of nothing worse than a prevalent atmosphere of hunt-ball high-jinks at court, which English chroniclers and clerical critics also indicate, and of course the understandable submission of an aged widower to the charms of Alice Ferrers. The desperate attempt to make Edward III interesting fails.

What remains is the world of Froissart: the many hard and glorious campaigns of Edward and his sons, the brilliant court. On all popular writers about Edward III and his times Froissart exercises a fatal fascination. His transference to the real world of contemporary courts and battlefields of the values of chivalric romance of course mirrored an aspect of the ideology of politics which really existed. But a medieval king was a political personage and his life demands an analysis of the political structure in which he lived. It is unfortunately characteristic of much popular history of this period that Packe gives a lengthy and picturesque account of the Black Death but largely ignores the dramatic changes in the structure of politics which the plague had already caused before Edward died.

There is a political biography of Edward III waiting to be written. Mr Packe, agreeable writer as he is in detail, is trapped like many others in a romantic vision of "an age when war still had a certain lusty innocence". So his book becomes a kind of modern rendering of Froissart's episodic chronicle, lacking Froissart's authenticity. Without a realistic setting in social and political structure history really does become "just one damned thing after another". If reading that kind of narrative appeals to one, one will enjoy this book; and if not, not.

## Turning to taxation

P. D. G. Thomas

JOHN L. BULLION

A Great and Necessary Measure:  
George Grenville and the Genesis of  
the Stamp Act 1763-1765  
317pp, University of Missouri Press.  
£18.  
0 8262 0375 2

George Grenville, one of Britain's least-known prime ministers, has recently attracted growing attention, soon to culminate in the first biography of him, by Philip Lawson. For Americans Grenville has never been obscure; his name will forever be linked with the Stamp Act taxing Britain's colonies in 1765. This is the narrow subject of John L. Bullion's study, which does not embrace even the other colonial measures of Grenville's ministry.

The source materials for this topic are scanty, so how did Professor Bullion contrive to produce a book of 300 pages? He does not claim to have found any significant new facts, and avowedly bases his book on "a careful study of the language of the familiar sources". This is done exhaustively and exhaustingly, and not only because Bullion believes in dotting the i's and crossing the t's. All too often the same facts and the same quotations are repeated, in slightly varying contexts. He has erected a large edifice on a slender foundation of evidence, and although his detailed handling of that evidence carries the hall-mark of a historical craftsman, it hardly bears the weight of the interpretations he puts upon it. The book is almost a work of logic rather than one of history, based on the premises that men act in a rational and consistent fashion, the men in this case being Grenville, his colleagues and subordinates.

Bullion employs a whole squad of weasel words to sustain his argument, adverbs like "probably", "apparently" and the horrible "doubtlessly", and such verbal constructions as "would", "must", and "may".

Typical is his account of the Bute ministry's discussion of colonial taxation early in 1763. He admits that the evidence exists, and in fact produces none directly relevant. This disadvantage does not prevent him from concocting a description of the meeting which probably would have been contained in such discussions and the conclusion they must have come to, a performance that might deceive the unwary reader into thinking it a survey

of actual events. All through the book one is left with the feeling that a great deal of what Bullion produces as hypothesis probably did happen in much the way he suggests, but of hard evidence there is very little. Logical exposition is no substitute for documented research. Who was it who said that it is easier to write philosophy than history?

Two aspects of Bullion's methodology are particularly disturbing. Sometimes he argues from the absence of evidence, assuming that lack of knowledge of what Grenville thought or said or did on certain occasions meant that Grenville did not then speak or act. The requisite scholarly qualification, "as far as it is known", would usually have weakened the force of the point he was making. On one occasion he compounds this fault by denying the survival of evidence that does exist. He makes this claim about a report known to have been sent to Lord Bute by his secretary Charles

Jenkinson of the important Commons debate of March 18, 1763, on the molasses duty. Yet this report is in the Bute MSS, formerly at Cardiff and recently transferred to the present Lord Bute's home at Mountstuart, one of the manuscript collections disregarded by the author and a fairly obvious place to look.

A more serious flaw in Bullion's method is his practice of supplementing the strictly contemporary evidence by the interpolation of arguments culled from later speeches and pamphlets. It is dangerous to assume that the motives afterwards publicly proclaimed with the advantage of hindsight were those of the Grenville ministry at the time. The picture Grenville gave in 1766 of his motives for postponing the Stamp Act two years before does not accord with what is known of his thinking in 1764. Bullion himself is aware that what Grenville later said about his molasses duty was misleading. Yet he is heavily

dependent on this mode of scholarship throughout his book.

What fresh light is thrown on the British policies that led to the American Revolution? Very little. There are different shades of emphasis and opinion, and a few quibbles that arise sometimes from ignorance of British political and parliamentary practice. To give, but one example, Bullion does not appreciate that the 1764 suggestion of John Huske of ME that the Stamp Act be amended so that the Bill should be read twice by the Commons and then sent to America for consideration was constitutional nonsense — the Bill would lapse at the end of the parliamentary session. The procedure adopted, of a formal resolution, served Huske's purpose, yet Bullion makes a meal of the difference.

Although Grenville dominates the book, the character portrayal of him, based on a short period of two or three years, does not ring true in the longer

perspective of his career. Bullion describes Grenville as a political gambler, apparently because in 1762 he jeopardized, and in 1765 sacrificed his political future by his uncompromising attitudes. Grenville was a man identified by his contemporaries as a solid rock of dependability, not as another Charles Townshend. To imply that he was a gambler in his American policy is pure nonsense. Bullion himself continually reiterates that Grenville's colonial taxation was based on the belief that the stamp duties would "be self-enforcing in the face of all American objections. Grenville's assumption of law-abiding American behaviour was to prove unfounded, and in a turnaround final chapter he is blamed for lack of knowledge of the colonial scene as "the author of all the troubles in America". Professor Bullion ought to apply to his overall thinking the remorseless logic he employs in processing his detailed evidence.

## Around the lumber-room

Anthony Phelan

M. R. MINDEN

Arno Schmidt: A Critical Study of His Prose

283pp, Cambridge University Press.  
£25.00

The pressures of Arno Schmidt's novels and short stories not unlike those of a commonplace book, are found in recognition of the familiar and discovery of the unusual. As so much remained unfamiliar, academic work on Schmidt in West Germany has long been industrialized in the collective labour of identifying the welter of quotation and reminiscence in which his later works, particularly abundant. The house-journal of the Schmidt dechiffriers, the *Bürgerliche Boie*, has hence tended towards a "palaeontologist's Newellish". Approch. Michael Minden is as good a "Sherlock Holmes of philology" as the next near, and he doesn't mind telling us what his finds anticipated those of the *Boie*; but the great merit of his book is that he is willing to go beyond these factual and statistical investigations and to offer

instead an argued survey of Schmidt's work from *Leviathan* (1949) to *Abend mit Goldrand* (1975), without losing sight of the intricate network of details.

The book works on two fronts. Part One examines Schmidt's handling of narrative, the construction of his fictional world, and his preoccupation with the relationship of language and reality. Schmidt's own, rather cranky theory of prose-forms. In practice, Schmidt's subversions of narrative convention were supposed to produce a more thoroughgoing realistic representation of the perceived world. Because the perceiving mind needed to be included in this enterprise, the "consistent" naturalism of his early work moved towards an interior "Sekundenstil", until, finally, flights of the imagination and eruptions of the unconscious more or less displaced any empirical *domäne*. The ultimate ground of this realism is personal, an autobiography with Words and all, as Schmidt might have put it. Nevertheless, this is a kind of realist and Minden's account is accordingly at the heart of the matter. On the other hand, the book could well do without a number of more fashionable terms, gestures, writing levels of integration, marks, and

signatures — which repeatedly dress up remarks without ever yielding a consistent theory.

The second part of Minden's study concentrates on a single text, *KAFK auch Mare Crisium*, published in 1960 and so at the threshold of Schmidt's later interest in Freud and Joyce. In this, Minden patiently pursues three work-reconciling vocabulary, the ready-made of cultural allusion, and the *curiosae* or notions treasured by the *bricoleur*. Although it might have helped, to identify these "consciousness-constructs" in constructed sequences and in some sort of hierarchical order, Minden settles for Schmidt's own suggestion, "mosaic", a pattern which relies locally on abstract geometrical forms but which also add up to a mimetic whole. Yet "pattern" seems a rather premature judgment of what is in effect a repetitive series.

The author's own uneasiness registers in the occasional shift of metaphor from mosaic-stone to "current coin within the economy of the book". The systematic links between such recurrent materials do become clearer, however, when they are derived from a common source, be it the Bible, the French Revolution, or the works of Karl May. The rather old-fashioned idea of "themes" does not sit easily to what sounds like a crash course for *Mastermind*, but after some juggling with "thematic zones", "thematic cluster", and "thematic complex" (not to mention a "knot of thematic details"), Minden manages to fix a number of Schmidt's preoccupations, including — the relations between sex and creativity, the status of the West-German intellectual, and various aspects of Federal politics since the war. This is very valuable. The reader can go back to *KAFK*, certain of distinguishing the important motifs from the mass of detail, and since so much of that is illuminated he may well be ready to do a bit of exploring on his own account.

This reader — Minden's as much as Schmidt's — is a major problem, however. The author may hope to extend the debate about and interests in Schmidt, but the English-speaking

world, but in spite of Marion Boyars' heroic publication of an English *Gedichtenrepublik* (*The Egghead Republic*), his work is scarcely known here — perhaps least of all on the matter of university courses devoted to recent and contemporary German literature. This might have been remedied if Minden had offered any kind of historical or literary context for Schmidt. It should, for instance, have been possible to relate his work to other experimentalists, to Heisenberg to Jürgen Becker, or to the neo-realism of Dieter Wellmer. Nor is it accidental that Peter Rühmkorf's variation on Klopstock's "Zürchersee" ode cited Schmidt in the 1950s as a "model response" to Germany's post-war restoration.

It is now high time that the eccentric Schmidt was recognized as a representative figure. This would mean giving more than a nod to the mean fascinated transcriptions of the human voice, and hence to his own work, "schmuddrig", the downy tone. This "schmuddrig", critical individualism can give a clue to the political moment of Schmidt's fiction which is signally lacking in it. The author may hope to extend the debate about and interests in Schmidt, but the English-speaking

## Rumours of Romanism

Roger Lockyer

CAROLINE M. HIBBARD

Charles I and the Popish Plot  
342pp, University of North Carolina Press.  
£21.  
0 8078 1520 9

In his opening speech to the Long Parliament, in November 1640, John Pym asserted that "there is a design to alter law and religion. The party that affects this are papists, who are obliged by a maxim in their doctrine, that they are not only to maintain their religion, but also to extirpate others." This belief in the existence of a popish plot to destroy the Protestant religion and of the necessity of a "model response" so compelling that it drove a substantial section of the political nation to challenge the authority of Charles I, and thereby opened the way to civil war. Subsequent generations of historians have tended to dismiss the "Catholic conspiracy" as a myth, yet it popery presented no real threat either to the English church or to English liberties, why was the political nation so obsessed with it? Part of the answer is that anti-Catholicism was, like anti-semitism today, an irrational and paranoid impulse. But Caroline Robbins, by taking a close look at what was happening in and around Charles I's court in the closing years of the

personal rule, has shown that fears of Catholic conspiracy were founded on something more substantial than mere bigotry. Indeed, there was not one "popish plot" but several. Queen Henrietta Maria, for instance, had established her household as a mission centre which was actively proselytizing among the court aristocracy. Spanish and French ambassadors were active in England, their connections with English Catholics, hoping to derive political advantage from them. But most disturbing of all from the point of view of ordinary English Protestants was the presence in London of a resident papal agent, George Con, sent over in 1636 to act as the co-ordinator of the various Catholic endeavours which it was hoped might lead to the return of England to the papal fold.

Protestantism, of course, was deeply rooted in English society by the seventeenth century, yet events on the Continent had shown how determined action on the part of Catholic rulers could change the religious complexion of a state. Charles I's subjects had therefore good reason to be apprehensive when they saw the defender of their faith married to a Catholic, holding daily discussions with the papal agent, and angling for an alliance with Spain, traditionally the most uncompromising of all Catholic powers. Was Charles himself a Catholic? The question might seem absurd in view of the fact that he died a

self-proclaimed martyr for the Protestant Church of England. Yet he never subscribed to the popular belief that the Pope was Antichrist, and he longed to see Christendom reunited. Furthermore he was by temperament a high churchman, and he put the full weight of his authority behind Archbishop Laud, whose emphasis on ritual and formalism seemed to him the only way to bring the English church closer in spirit to Rome than to Geneva.

It was Laud's attempt to force a new prayer-book on Scotland that sparked off the revolt which led to the collapse of the personal rule. Con and the Queen seized this opportunity to demonstrate the goodwill of the Catholic community at home and abroad, in contrast to the disloyalty of the Scottish Covenanters and their Puritan sympathizers south of the border. English Catholics contributed thousands of pounds towards the cost of raising a royal army to suppress the revolt, while both Spain and the Papacy offered substantial loans to Charles. In return for appropriate concessions, as the crisis deepened so the negotiations became more frenzied and the proposed solutions more extreme. The King could have tried to unite the nation behind him by summoning a parliament, but he delayed doing so for fear that the price of parliamentary support would be the dismantling of Laudianism. As a result, he was left at the mercy of Catholic elements which were quite

prepared to use force and welcomed the prospect of establishing an autocratic monarchy in England as a prelude to reunion with Rome. It was their activities, with or without the King's knowledge and approval, which provided substance for belief in the existence of a popish plot.

Yet such a belief was not solely a product of the Scottish crisis, and it is a weakness of Caroline Hibbard's otherwise admirable book that its range is so narrow. Apprehension about the growth of papist influence at court went back at least to the 1620s, when it was focussed upon the royal favourite, Buckingham. And the conviction that time was running out, that England must commit herself unequivocally to the holy war against the papal Antichrist, had an even longer pedigree. Anti-Catholicism was not at the periphery of English public life but at its heart and centre, for as Secretary Nicholas reminded his royal master, in 1641, "the abuse of an intention to introduce popery was that which first brought into dislike with the people the government both of the church and commonwealth."

The first volume of a new yearbook, *Parliamentary History* (281pp, Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 0 86299 013 0) includes articles and reviews by Helen Miller, Geoffrey Holmes and Clive Jones, Philip Lawson, Norman Gash, J. R. Vincent and by the yearbook's editor, Eveline Cruickshanks.



# An indecent haste for independence

Cyril Ehrlich

PROSSER GIFFORD and W. M. ROGER LOUIS (Editors)

*The Transfer of Power in Africa: Decolonization 1940-1960*  
654pp. Yale University Press. £25.  
0300 025688

Why, and with what effect, did the European powers relinquish their African colonies? Probably the most sensible response to this premature question, as David Fieldhouse is practically alone in pointing out, is "wait and see". Most of his colleagues in this impressive symposium reply with more assurance, displaying the fruits of a generation's research. In stark contrast to Asian experience, argues D. A. Low, African independence came faster than anyone expected, easily and, in most places, without a fight. The two were linked, in the sense that countries which had already lost Asian empires were loth to repeat retentionist follies. Belgium was the exception, of course, but her proximity to Holland and France was sufficiently enlightening to reinforce the ultimate decision to quit, particularly after the Algerian crisis. Because *turnus* was so easily achieved in tropical Africa, nationalist parties were innocent of the dedication and organization that leftist forces in particular had established in Asia.

In other parts of Africa conditions were quite different. Colonial regimes in Spain, Portugal and the whistles of Rhodesia and South Africa - had no such experience: for them Dien Bien Phu was merely a newspaper headline; resistance to change was prolonged and bloody. W. M. Roger Louis and Ronald Robinson seek explanations elsewhere, arguing that decolonization was not regarded by contemporaries as inevitable, and was not much influenced by Asian affairs. Emerging from "the interaction of international, metropolitan, and colonial politics" it was shaped by the changing balance of world power, and by American anti-colonialism, which helped to undermine British imperial self-confidence. Forebodings of collapse and anarchy were killed by "hopes of economic development and political stability through constitutional safeguards". One group which tried to influence American policy was an alliance of radical blacks and visiting African students who, according to Hollis Lynch, "educated" the American public about Africa, and won support for a constructive and progressive American role on that continent.

Contrasting manners of departures are a recurring theme. Tony Smith is generous about Britain's performance, comparing our temperamental and institutional preparedness with the refusal of France even to consider separation. He quotes a Brazzaville conference on postwar imperial reorganization:

The ends of the civilizing work accomplished by France in the colonies exclude any idea of autonomy, all possibility of evolution outside the French block of the Empire: the eventual constitution, even in the future, of self-government in the colonies is denied.

In the Ivory Coast, the French reformed and continued French presence found its exemplar in Houphouët-Boigny, "hard and liberator": leading planner, and spokesman for the African bourgeoisie. Four contributors discuss the French experience. Yves Person sees the *Loi Cadre* of 1956 as a crucial reversal of centralizing traditions: "Soon, there will be governments everywhere, except in Africa," said Georges Bidault. De Gaulle hoped to keep a firm grasp, and retain world esteem by extending the power of the black bourgeoisie. The peaceful accomplishment of independence, argues Person, therefore entrenched an acculturated minority, and reinforced the exclusion of most Africans. "The inchoate, nonentity, without culture or recognized personality". Ideas of nation-building were merely "empty talk".

Eljaja M. Bokolo describes the

evolution of Equatorial Africa. "Cinderella of the French Empire", subject, until 1940, to "brutal economic exploitation and uncompromising political domination". Subsequent liberalization and encouragement of the *évolués* was followed by an independence which merely installed neo-colonialism, because France was determined to preserve its interests, and the new governing élites to maintain their privileged status. Henri Brunschwig's view is altogether more benign. French decolonization was "unique and specific", unaffected by outside circumstances, save one. Foreign to French ideology, it was nevertheless achieved by "the colonized people themselves who colonized and decolonized French black Africa".

An alternate form of mysticism initially threatens to dull the impact of Jean Suret-Cadot's essay on "The Economic Background". Marxist credentials are presented, with the obligatory genuflections. Lenin divines, presumably from the mausoleum, the 1970 distribution of capital investment in Francophone Africa (p. 469, n. 31). Imports are inevitably dubbed "shoddy", and their huge increase is regarded as evidence, not of increasing prosperity, but of the (implicitly undesirable) "pervasive growth of the mercantile economy, the decline of the traditional subsistence economy, and increasing urbanization". Shrewd observation sits uneasily amidst these clouds of obscurantism, but it would be churlish to deny its presence. Thus Suret-Cadot identifies the new bureaucracy as an essential feature of Francophone Africa:

It takes advantage of its administrative and political functions in order to build private fortunes (commissions from government-managed markets, real-estate concessions, membership on the boards of directors of certain companies), but its economic role remains secondary and in any case subordinate. Traditions against ostentation and favouring redistribution make it difficult for its members to accumulate wealth, but when they do it goes to France or Switzerland.

He concludes that the retreat from Africa deserves neither praise for being disinterested, nor insult for "disillusioned perfidy". It is merely imperialism's rearranged action. In the eternal dialectic "history has not ended: it is just beginning".

Discussion of British decolonization

## Divination and decoration

J. B. Donne

ULLI BEIER  
Yoruba Beaded Crowns: Sacred Regalia of the Olukoku of Okuku  
114pp. with 116 photographs, 16 in colour. Ethnographica, 19 Westbourne Road, London N7 8AN. £12.50.  
0 905 78804 4

The Cult of Ifá among the Yoruba  
Volume One: Folk Practice and the Art  
125pp. with 84 photographs. Ethnographica, £10.  
0 905 78801 3

ALISON HODGE  
Nigeria's Traditional Crafts: A Survey  
96pp. with 112 photographs. Ethnographica, £4.75.  
0 905 788 11 7

Among people without a traditional writing system, the difference in the study of art and artefacts collected by photographers and those found by archaeologists is the difference between history and prehistory. And this is often a no-man's land between the two where oral tradition has become a shroud, that it can no longer be unshrouded with the findings of

tends, predictably, to be more matter-of-fact. John Hargreaves describes how policy in West Africa gathered momentum after the Gold Coast riots in 1948, proceeding via schemes for social improvement, economic "development", and elaborately conceived self-government, to "conditions where the speedy transfer of power to acceptable African collaborators became an end in itself". Denis Austin encompasses the world in search of Britain's point of no return; noting en route that recruitment into the Colonial Service increased by more than fifty per cent between 1947 and 1957, and that successive Labour and Conservative governments were determined to retain the nation's "global" status. Writing before the Falklands crisis, Austin remarks that such pretensions "died very hard", surviving well into the 1960s, but detects a growing haste, indifference and weariness (his appropriate italics), and describes the Anguilla affair as "the imperialism of the absurd".

Cranford Pratt is determined to crush any remnants of self-esteem about British behaviour towards Tanganyika. Apparently nothing was commendable save the ultimate "style" of handover. The "arrogant self-confidence" of colonial officers; the fact that in 1961, the year of independence, senior civil servants and district administrators were still overwhelmingly expatriate; the "overweening arrogance" of attempts to build "multiracialism" in the country's political institutions; all are remorselessly catalogued. The final dénouement, enforced by external decisions to quit, was precipitous. An apprenticeship of "responsible" government, which Pratt defines as lasting nine years in Nigeria and six in the Gold Coast, took nineteen months in Tanganyika.

Grace Ibanga, former minister of justice in Uganda, is less censorious about British treatment of his country. The nub of his argument is that colonies were artificial constructs, containing diverse and sometimes hostile ethnic groups whose unification he discouraged, or at least did little to promote. But neither, unlike our successors, did we try to impose unity by brute force. Our ultimate attempts to ensure national harmony collapsed because they came too late to allow rivals to adjust "checks and balances under the objective eye of an impartial overseer", and because they were too fragile to withstand the onslaught of ruthless post-colonial regimes. Prosser Gifford recounts the tragicomic tale of

radiocarbon dating or thermoluminescence tests.

Ulli Beier, who has made himself a career as an exponent of Yoruba culture, brings this out clearly in his study of the fifty-eight crowns and beaded caps in the royal treasury of the Olukoku of Okuku, the twelve most important of which he illustrates and discusses in detail. Only Obas or kings who can lay claim to descent from the creator deity, Oduduwa, may wear them. Such crowns are recorded. The crown itself has a muslin or stiff cotton base on which designs in coloured beads are embroidered. Including one and sometimes several human faces. They are surmounted by royal beaded craft. But the most significant feature is whose purpose is to hide the wearer's face and to conceal the human identity of the divine king.

This is in complete contrast with the interpretation put on the wonderfully naturalistic life-size royal heads from the States, Europe and the Soviet Union at the exhibition *Traditions of Ancient Africa*. Here the faces are not veiled, but are boldly and publicly displayed in ceremonial or second burial to underline the continuity of the dynasty. Some of the difference between the

Central African Federation, a scheme which was almost unique in failing to achieve virtually all of its professed aims. Malawi and Zambia became independent, probably with more political and less economic muscle than if they had been left alone. Southern Rhodesia emerged with a stronger economy and entrenched minority regime. Politics and race relations were, of course, much exacerbated. "The federal legacy was finally undone by African arms".

The potent influence of national pride is demonstrated in two essays which are poles apart in content and style. Portugal's abandonment of empire was very slow and very complicated, or so it appears in a turgid chapter, littered with international lore and obscure acronyms (few pages contain less than ten, one eighteen). What emerges is that economic weakness at home engendered intransigence abroad, at great cost. By 1974 a quarter of Portuguese adult males were in the armed forces. Angola became, as Kissinger remarked, a decisive watershed in Soviet expansion into the Third World.

Jean Stengers, by contrast, gives a racy account of Belgian vicissitudes. Why in the Congo, he asks, was "complete political stagnation" followed by "emergency decolonization of such stupefying rapidity"? To describe prevailing attitudes as "no élites, no troubles" would be illuminating but anachronistic, because any premonition of political danger was simply unthinkable. The authorities were utterly convinced that their "formula" was correct: "keep the natives happy by looking after their welfare, their housing, and their health" and the Congo would remain an oasis, uncontaminated by demands for enfranchisement. Such convictions were actually reinforced by ferment in neighbouring colonies.

Education was left to the (heavily subsidized) missions, and confined to the primary needs of vocational training, evangelization, and the preparation of African-clergy: forty years separated the ordination of the first African priest and the first African graduate in 1956. Hostility to university education, long after it had taken root in British Africa, was openly expressed, not least by eminent professors of the left. Lovanium was eventually accepted merely as a safer alternative to the peril of Congolese students' attendance at European universities. *Évolués* aspired to gain the *baccalauréat* certificate as a passport to civil rights and respect. By 1955 they numbered 116, including

fourteenth and the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries", writes Beier, "Yoruba kingship developed from the splendours of a wealthy, cultured leadership to the mysteries and complexities of divine kingship". But what happened to bring this about in that period?

Other objects whose understanding depends entirely on the persistence of usage and oral tradition are the paraphernalia of the Ifá oracle, carried by diviners, often superbly carved, for holding the divinatory palm kernels, short staffs for summoning the gods, and boards for recording the casts. Divination is performed by the Ifá priest, or *babalawo*, whose series of casts of the sixteen palm nuts will reveal mathematically, as E. M. McClelland so clearly explains in *The Cult of Ifá among the Yoruba*, which of the 256 major or minor Odu has been selected. Then the *babalawo* will chant verses associated with that Odu but it is up to the inquirer to appreciate their relevance to his problem. These, which include instructions as to the correct manner and kind of sacrifices to be made, may be as gnomish as any of the utterances of the priestesses of Delphi and can easily baffle the client.

You supervisors of sacrifices in heaven, Come and help me here, Or if it is the bird, Supervisors of sacrifices in heaven, Come and help me here.

Patrice Lumumba, "wounded and disappointed" by false promises, but not yet openly rebellious. Then came their first manifesto, *Conscience Africaine*, which demanded participation in thirty years of four. Stengers attributes accordingly to the "external incitement" of Ghana's independence and de Gaulle's 1958 Brazzaville speech, and the "internal dynamics" of liberty. Soon after the Léopoldville riots of January 1959, the authorities were faced with revolt in the towns and a substantial portion of the countryside. The ensuing débâcle is partly explained by the extraordinary concentration of decision-makers: "Leopold II had created the Congo from his Brussels palace without ever going to Africa." It was unmade by a small number of policymakers, the majority of whom were from the metropole. The ultimate capitulation derived from the impossibility of a forced alternative: stupefied by the destruction of a cherished image, the happy black with the broad smile, Belgium could not contemplate sending troops. The "renowned" army, administration, church and companies, which had dominated policy, merely stood aside.

One hundred and twenty pages devoted to bibliographical essays and listings include a useful Who's Who of office-holders, a few mistakes and some curious gaps, particularly in economics and economic history. Hancock's magisterial *Survey of the Congo*, Kenneth Robinson's *The Dilemmas of Trusteeship* mentioned in the text, but omitted from the bibliography. Andrei is absent, and there is nothing by Peter Bauer less than 1954. The general indifference to economic dimensions is remedied in part by Professor Fieldhouse's far concluding chapter. We noted, at the outset, his conviction that perspectives are still too short to justify any verdicts. His healthy scepticism of "transient historiographical fashions" to a lucid exposition of the evolution and impact of "underdevelopment" and "dependency" theories, his description of "postwar neocolonialism" has the great merit of giving momentary prominence to bulk purchase, the ground-out school, the colonial currency and marketing boards. But by lumping them together and depicting their rapid degeneration, glosses over the continuing persistence of effects of marketing control. In peasant societies, it is the legacy of a few commodities, and a political economy which pervades the *divine hereditas* of independent Africa.

The subject of Dobbs's current biography is the famous novelist Mad Molly Steen, and the Paddy character who interests him is Mad Molly's "Mad Molly". Once the object of a fruitless amorous pursuit by Steen, and the perpetrator of a grotesque jest upon him, Mad Molly's vivacity in this respect is illustrated in an early piece which involves a parody of schoolgirls, overtaken by some hysterical pressure, rushing headlong into an ornamental pond, one scrambling out and being promptly pushed back by Mad Molly, the possessor of an over-developed faculty for merrymaking. Molly belongs in a succession of outrageously overblown characters who, for Peter Dickinson, typify a particular era of the past - in

this instance the 1920s. This author has no hesitation in assembling his characters' eccentricities from all the most blatant sources.

Molly Benison, heroine of an era which seems remote to a twelve-year-old even from the vantage point of 1940, has ended up inhabiting a conservatory on the Paddery estate. Here Paul is invited on Sundays to take tea and crumpets. ("It turned out she'd known my father", he says; and no apology is offered for the coincidence.) Molly's female companion, ugly, drunken and deranged, is, like herself, a refugee from the Paris of Apollinaire, Gertrude Stein and Sylvia Beach - the fact that such people surround the invented novelist Steen unfortunately diminishes the latter's credibility. Instead of indicating the complex relationship between the real and the unreal in any work of fiction, which is presumably what the author intended. The chapters set in the present day in part consider the fictional transformations to which real-life experience is subject, and provide, among the doubts, muddles and hesitations the topic evokes, at least one effective symbol for the process: a cat's cradle.

The story from the past, which the fictional novelist Paul Rogers is soon attempting to turn into a novel, continues with a deer cull which becomes a shambles (initiated with the object of procuring a good supply of venison for Benison), a proposed elopement and a murder disguised as the act of a rogue stag; in so far as he follows the calling of the thriller-writer, Peter Dickinson is nothing if not full-blooded. There is, however, something tortuous and tiresome in the novel dealing with the novelist's craft, which no amount of assurance or cleverness on the part of the author can eradicate. You have to give Peter Dickinson credit for audacity when he inserts into his novel a more-or-less accurate description of the method he has used - "The quickest solution was to botch together a book out of my MS. letters from and to 'Dobbs', and some linking passages" - but the effect of this is less disarming than he might have wished. Like the work of another trickster, John Fowles, *Hindsight* pretends to rather more significance than it achieves. And, in so far as it is composed of notes, jottings, letters, self-admonitions, fragments from the past and reflections in the present, it resembles a cat's cradle less than a dog's dinner.

Although Finn has some disgust with modern England, of a sort that Modernism and Reading aroused in Jerome, his succession of multi-storey car parks, artificial tracks with lavatories, ring-pull sardine tins, a grinding parallel to the famous *Roads on Wheels*, and so forth is rendered so self-consistently and at such length that the final effect is merely soggy. The jogging, predictably enough, comes in for some authorial comment together with an explanatory parenthesis "for the benefit of those readers who may be skin through this book in two or three hundred years' time". Such readers would be well advised to give Timothy Finn a miss and make sure that they know Jerome's book. They, too, will wonder whether or not Montmorency's water-rat was added to the Irish stew.

Timothy Finn's three men decide to walk along Offa's Dyke, leaving the motor-car at one end to be collected by a girlfriend of one of the three. *Three Men in a Boat* is taken up by preparations for the journey. This time, however, one of the three would hurry up and get on with it, and perhaps leave behind such hat-topped sentences as "Fraser said that he had been well observed - whether by Winston Churchill or by himself, he would better not to travel at all than bibliography, and for those who want the time or opportunity to go to the sources: this is a handy and well-illustrated introduction". The feebleness of this appears all the greater when one

## Venison for Benison

Patricia Craig

PETER DICKINSON  
*Hindsight*  
192pp. Bodley Head. £7.95.  
0 370 30514 0

Peter Dickinson's novel *Hindsight* sports a dust-jacket depicting a deer denuded-looking stag (very ineptly done) - deliberate joke or singular infelicity? Because of various clues dotted about the narrative you have to go for the former. The book is about the way in which the experience of past events is altered in retrospect, but a lot of the action takes place in a deer park, and this leaves you with a feeling of uncertainty over which came first, the setting or the pun.

The deer park, in Devon, is attached to a large house called Paddery, to which a boys' prep school has been evacuated during the troubled summer of 1940. Among the pupils attending the school is twelve-year-old Paul Rogers, nicknamed Rogue (either this sobriquet is significant, or it isn't; Peter Dickinson is sometimes maddeningly equivocal in his use of symbolic pointers). What happens to Paul at Paddery is recounted in alternate chapters (*Hindsight* is constructed on the same pattern as *The Last House in the Valley*, Peter Dickinson's last novel), while the rest of the book moves forward to 1980, by which time the novelist Paul Rogers is engaged in remembering his prep-school days for the benefit of an ailing biographer named Simon Dobbs who needs some information about a Paddery figure.

The subject of Dobbs's current biography is the famous novelist Mad Molly Steen, and the Paddy character who interests him is Mad Molly's "Mad Molly". Once the object of a fruitless amorous pursuit by Steen, and the perpetrator of a grotesque jest upon him, Mad Molly's vivacity in this respect is illustrated in an early piece which involves a parody of schoolgirls, overtaken by some hysterical pressure, rushing headlong into an ornamental pond, one scrambling out and being promptly pushed back by Mad Molly, the possessor of an over-developed faculty for merrymaking. Molly belongs in a succession of outrageously overblown characters who, for Peter Dickinson, typify a particular era of the past - in

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## A hike on the Dyke

Christopher Hawtree

TIMOTHY FINN  
*Three Men in a Boat*  
140pp. Duckworth. £6.95.  
0 7156 1717 6

It can only have been to prove the impossibility of writing a sequel to *Three Men in a Boat* that Jerome K. Jerome published *Three Men on the Bummel*. Ninety-four years on, Timothy Finn, like many a television producer before him, has ignored this to the temptation to foist his own fancies on Jerome's classic. *Three Men in a Boat* is more painful to read than all those continuations of Jane Austen's unfinished minor works, the solutions to *Edwin Drood* or the recent "updating" of *Jane Bond*.

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thinks of Jerome's adaptation of a famous quotation early in his book: "After supper, you find your tobacco is damp, and you cannot smoke. Luckily you have a bottle of the stuff that cheeps and inebriates, if taken in proper quantity, and this, too, you find sufficient interest in life to induce you to go to bed."

This sort of humour can develop in two ways: the English language can be manipulated elegantly and ridiculously, keeping a hint of truth, to create the perfection of a P. G. Wodehouse; it can also be used in a way that might, at best, sustain an entry to a weekly paper's competition. Finn's three men have a clumsy time trying to understand such things as a foreign-printed instruction leaflet for their hiking-framers.

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## Blossoming anew

Mary Kathleen Benet

CAROLYN SLAUGHTER  
*The Banquet*  
191pp. Allen Lane. £6.95.  
0 7139 1574 9

Food must be the most widely used literary metaphor. Raw or cooked, reward and punishment and love-substitute - hard to imagine a novel without it. Never, though, has the metaphor been carried so far as in this dazzling little performance.

Gourmet cook Harold spots delicious Blossom working in the food hall of Marks and Spencer in High Street Kensington. He watches and waits, admiring her peachy complexion, her cherry lips. . . . But though Harold may be a bit creepy, he doesn't want to hurt her like a Ripper or imprison her like a Collector. He just wants to eat her up.

For Blossom is a truly edible woman. "Her mouth like a cake warm from the oven. . . . She had nipples like oatmeal biscuits with small pink tips. Her skin seemed to be dusted with icing sugar, it smelt of marzipan. . . . This and a lot

more is lovely (un; but though the book is crafted with dandyish care, the dénouement slowly and skillfully teased out, it is no heartless black comedy.

The premonitions of disaster are there from the start. Blossom is tempted into Harold's perfect mews house where they consume many old perfect meals together, make love, find happiness. But, we are told, a love so perfect and all-consuming is doomed. When will the axe fall? And why? It gradually emerges that Harold's adored mother went mad and left the family when he was six, and that his father retreated into religious mania. Harold has been left with an aching emotional void that no love can fill; Blossom feels herself being engulfed by his need; it is this that frightens the girl and precipitates the tragedy.

Carolyn Slaughter has covered some exotic fictional terrain, from the Kalahari Desert of her childhood to the life of Mary Magdalene to a tale of Victorian incest. Throughout her work, though, especially in the haunting *Columba*, the painful loss of parental love is the emotional charge. Here, it is so powerful it almost shakes the book apart. Harold's reminiscences are far more heart-rending than anything that happens

repeatedly broken by sorties into the absurd. An underlying sentimentality eventually rises to the surface, and the dénouement deteriorates into cliché.

The secret of a happy life is, it transpires. Love; and *The River Why* turns out to be a throwback to the late 1960s, with its draft-cards and Vietnam madness, its heartfelt hip sentiments and psychedelic folk.

Perceptive moments are swamped by Duncan's propensity for the impromptu seminar, or sudden epiphany, and the book becomes less readable in direct proportion to its attempts to be clever. From Milton to

Fishing-books are by tradition stocked with fictions, but there are also novels that turn the pursuit of elusive fish into an analogue of other human ambitions. David James Duncan's first novel starts by being about fishing itself. Gus, the narrator, is a young American "fishing genius" whose father, Henning Hale-Orviston (nicknamed "H2O"), is a legendary fly-fisher and cowardly English snob, and whose mother, Ma (which, we are told, means "water" in Arabic) is a Redeye-swimming cowl whose sole passion is bait-fishing. Their domestic life is a slapstick tangle of nymphs and tackle, the reader needs to be familiar with the "Nighthawks" and "2x tippets" and they were a running war over the interpretation of Isaac Walton's piscatorial ethics.

Equally devoted to this sport/religion, Gus takes off to live as a hermit on the banks of the Tamasaw river, where he soon realizes that his rod ("Rodney") and his flies alone do not comfort him. Gus develops *Angar*. He gets to know a lot of offbeat characters, hooks a corpse, becomes sick of fishing and the world; so, like the anadromous fish that are his quarry, he treks up to the source of the river on a vague spiritual pilgrimage. Discovering that the bends in the river form the shape "Why?", he confronts a number of ontological issues and ends up, mercifully, with a dramatic and somewhat over-the-top ending whose name is Eddy.

Since much of the dialogue is genuinely funny, and the book proceeds from its little on-wards by a series of contrived puns and nicknames, there is a temptation not to take any of this seriously. Duncan, however, increasingly upsets the reader towards urgent concerns, as the plot becomes less and less literal and more and more figurative. The novel suffers from its clash of styles: it is a riddling construct filled with hobby-horsh characters and formal or submerged dimensions, while it also offers a spiritual, or perhaps, a possible ultimate revelation that it never quite manages.

On the local level Duncan is capable of fine descriptive writing. Both in his observation of natural detail when he is outball human traits when he is comic, his imagination is original, but the plot lurches distinctly between these two modes. The meditative mood is

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T. J. Blayon

## Water muse

David Profumo

DAVID JAMES DUNCAN  
*The River Why*  
294pp. Hutchinson. £8.50.  
0 09 15300 3

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# Yahweh's exclusive society

Anthony Phillips

WERNER H. SCHMIDT

The Faith of the Old Testament: A History  
Translated by John Sturdy  
302pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £15.  
0 631 1377 9

As J. R. Porter points out in his foreword, Werner H. Schmidt's study is no straightforward account of the religion of Israel. Rather, the author's concern is to present that faith "in terms of its historical development in its widest context, not only through the history of the nation of Israel and its antecedent elements, but also in relation to the social, political and religious situation in the contemporary peoples and cultures of the ancient Near East". So the author sets out his material not by topics, but through four historical periods: the prehistory, the early period after the conquest, the period of the monarchy, and the late period. For Schmidt what unites the faith of Israel throughout these periods is that no matter to what other religious influences and pressures she is subjected, whether from internal or external sources, she herself is enabled to maintain the distinctiveness of that faith through measuring all theological propositions against the first two commandments. These were not derived from the surrounding world but serve to separate her from it. So exclusivism to Yahweh and absence of images determine Israel's approach to both criticism of her own faith and the ideas of other religions, enabling her to choose whether to accept, recast or reject their tenets. While her faith changed, its uniqueness was preserved. But to call this "syncretism" obscures what happened. "Israel did not leave unaltered what it took over from its environment and claimed 'for Yahweh', but reached a new understanding of it. . . . The Old Testament makes the decision what the borrowed concepts mean."

Schmidt's work was first published in 1968, this translation being of the 1982 fourth edition. It accordingly reflects the general uncertainty of current Old Testament scholarship following the

breakdown of the systematic picture of history and faith constructed by post-war Old Testament research. At many points Schmidt contents himself with setting out the issues, pointing to different interpretations and admitting where conjecture takes over. "We know relatively little for certain about the worship of Israel, and much is hypothetical." Of considerable importance is the author's caution in going beyond the evidence of the Old Testament itself by using extra-biblical material to interpret it. If the text does not point to a particular solution then the practice of another ancient Near Eastern faith does not necessarily indicate that it must also be so for Israel (eg. an Enthronement Festival), for throughout her history she remained a "stranger" in the world. Further, it was the once-for-all character of that history which meant that historical events, in contrast to mythical ones, were not "repeated" in the cult but remembered, and indeed acted as a "further criterion for Israel's relationship with other religions".

Israel's extensive borrowing from other peoples both near (Canaan) and far (Egypt and Mesopotamia) was then rigidly controlled, and foreign concepts were extensively reinterpreted. But as Schmidt recognizes, Israel was also able to develop her own mythological material, which one must assume, though Schmidt does not consider this, must have influenced other faiths along with her traditions of prophecy, wisdom and law.

The appearance of this book in English is to be warmly welcomed for the student, though hardly for the general reader, for it demands both knowledge of the tools of the trade (eg. the Pentateuchal sources, about which some comment might have been made in view of recent criticism) and contemporary issues of interpretation. The author's knowledge of the religion of the ancient Near East is wide and his use of it in relation to Israel's faith judicious. Discussion of particular topics, though sometimes uneven, is seen as creatively facing new historical situations while at the same time being tenacious of her past. It is a process of continuity and discontinuity as she works her way from exclusive

acknowledgment of Yahweh, the deliverer from Egypt, to the worship of Yahweh, the only God both of the living and the dead. The Old Testament, in its latest writings, by bringing "its faith into action against death too, and in its future expectation breaks through the barrier which has often been turned into a reproach against it, the this-worldly character of its beliefs". Yet in spite of increasing emphasis on the transcendence of God, the Old Testament never sees him as separated from his world or abandoning man.

The merit of Schmidt's survey is that in positing the centrality of the first and second commandments, "and to a lesser extent the fourth", he provides an explanation for both the origin of the distinctive faith of Israel and also its maintenance throughout the biblical period. Indeed he even considers the possibility that the third commandment was "already given with the name 'Yahweh', or at least

applied to it". But because Schmidt follows the fashionable view that legal demands (whether of the Decalogue or the Book of the Covenant) were not part of the Sinai pericope, he can provide no particular historical event for the introduction of these foundation provisions, though he accepts that both in time and substance they were "given" for Israel. He can even ask whether the strikingly close connection of faith and history in Israel might not be "a starting point for the demand of exclusiveness, and the first commandment a consequence of historical experience". Schmidt's task is not made easier by his separation of the Exodus and Sinai traditions, which he finds still unconnected in Deuteronomy, failing to recognize that the omission of the Sinai covenant by the prophet is deliberate as he stresses in contrast the three covenants of grace, those with Noah, Abraham and David.

Schmidt attempts to counter the general objection that "when a

relationship with God is established somewhere, a law must be given there which directs life in this relationship by citing the absence of such legal particularities. But this is by no means proven. While the Old Testament does not record any law provisions for the patriarchal faith, the Rechabite revolt, relying on this argument from silence.

Indeed since no adequate explanation has yet been offered for the 12th-century compilation of the Decalogue based on its content, Schmidt might have considered whether all ten commandments were "given" and collectively delineated Israel from her neighbours not only in the nature of her faith, but also in the social conditions in which that faith was practised. In view of Yahweh's acknowledged concern for man and his world, it would perhaps be surprising if this were otherwise.

All those interested in Coleridge's philosophy owe an enormous debt to Owen Barfield's great work of explanation, *What Coleridge Thought*. Barfield takes heroic pains to make comprehensible what Coleridge had good reasons for leaving obscure. Coleridge was exploring the application of certain ideas - multifarious in unity, the fusion of opposites, the relation between connection and distinction - to both physical and psychological phenomena. These ideas are often labelled "mystical", not because they do not apply to the material world, but because scientists, during a narrow historical period, chose to work under which such ideas were formally incomprehensible. But Coleridge, one suspects, did not want them to be comprehensible: "mystic" or not, he was inclined to be a mystifier. When he returned from giving a lecture to the Royal Society of Literature, ostensibly on the *Prometheus* of Aeschylus (Coleridge had characteristically chosen the most problematic work in the history of Western literature), he wrote to John Taylor Coleridge that he "inflicted the whole Essay (an hour and 25m) on the ears of the R.L.S., with most successful sympathy with the audience, who could not possibly understand the 10th part". Take this in conjunction with the extraordinary episode in the *Biographia Literaria* where Coleridge interrupts himself, practically in mid-sentence, with a letter from "a friend", advising him not to continue with an exposition which his readers would similarly have no

Archbishop Fisher's visit to Pope John XXIII in December 1960, as McAdoo points out, "broke the ice of centuries", and the positive attitude of Vatican II to ecumenical questions created a new atmosphere in Church relations. A further step was taken when Archbishop Ramsey visited the VI in 1966 and the Joint Preparatory Commission began its work as a result. The "Common Declaration" issued by Paul VI and Archbishop Coggan after their meeting in Rome in 1977 gave a further impetus, but perhaps even more significant was the Pope's public reference to the Anglican Church at the canonization of the Forty Martyrs of England and Wales on October 25, 1970, when he looked forward to a time when the Roman Catholic Church - this humble servant of the servants of God - is able to embrace her ever-beloved sister in the one authentic communion of the family of Christ, a remark not devoid of theological implications when compared with the condemnatory language of *Apostolicae Curiae*.

McAdoo discusses the work of the two inter-Church Commissions showing where agreement has been achieved and indicating areas where problems and difficulties still persist. His essay is an essential introduction for anyone wishing to understand the present state of affairs in Anglican-Roman Catholic relations or who hopes to appreciate the often laborious and intricate negotiations that made possible such an occasion as the visit of John Paul II to Canterbury in 1982. McAdoo, first as Bishop of Ossington and later as Archbishop of Dublin, has been concerned with both Commissions as an Anglican delegate since 1967 and was co-chairman with Bishop Clark (now Roman Catholic Bishop of East Anglia) of the working group. The next step, it must be noted, is for a limited communication in *scriptis* (which already exists between Rome and the Orthodox Churches), but *Apostolicae Curiae* still lies like a log across the road to inter-communion. In spite of the assurance that "in a new context" are now "put in a new context" the theologians, notwithstanding the problems still at issue the essay leaves the reader with a feeling of hope for the future and a respect for the representatives of the two Churches who have worked so harmoniously and purposefully together for the past fifteen years.

Archbishop McAdoo links the two foregoing papers to his survey of recent ecumenical progress by a discussion of the correspondence between Archbishop Wake and the French theologian Louis du Pin in the early eighteenth century, and the private talks held by the second Viscount Halifax and the Abbe Portal in 1890. These talks, during which the con-

## Converging confessions

Brian Fothergill

J. C. H. AVELING, D. M. LOADES and H. R. MCADOO

Rome and the Anglicans: Historical and Doctrinal Aspects of Anglican - Roman Catholic Relations.  
Edited by Wolfgang Haase  
301pp. Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter  
3 11 008267 5

The day is long past when John Henry Newman could write of the Church of his baptism that "the thought of the Anglican service makes me shiver, and the thought of the Thirty-nine Articles makes me shudder", when Cardinal Wiseman could only visualize the conversion of England, for which he fervently prayed, in terms of "submission" to Rome, or when pious Anglicans could complacently identify the Roman Church with the scarlet woman. These robust attitudes gave a certain zest to controversy, but the de-

Christianizing impact of the industrial revolution and two world wars, and the secularizing effect of political and social revolution, have forced the Churches to contemplate their divisions with more charity and a concentration rather upon what the differing confessions hold in common than upon what dogmas still keep them apart. The historical process, at once fascinating and encouraging, that has brought this change of attitude about, forms the underlying theme of the three essays that make up this book.

The first two contributions, "Relations between the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches in the 16th and 17th Centuries" by D. M. Loades and "The English Clergy, Catholic and Protestant" during the same period by J. C. H. Aveling, give the historical background against which H. R. McAdoo's authoritative exposition of the work of the Joint Preparatory Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission and its successor, the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, of both of which he was a member, did their work. Professor Loades has the difficult task of compressing two hundred years of fraught national and ecclesiastical history into the compass of forty-nine pages, and there are moments when his pace almost takes one's breath away, passing from the breach with Rome in Henry VIII's reign to the days of the Exclusion crisis and the brief and unhappy reign of Britain's last Catholic monarch. If Loades's pace is brisk, however, his narrative is fully documented so that the reader is directed to sources for a wider discussion of points to which the author can only give fleeting attention.

Aveling's writing on the less familiar topic of the state of the clergy, bishops, and almost equally hampered (eighty-six pages), he manages none the less to survey, among other themes, the problem of liturgical changes, the disputes between regulars and seculars among the mission priests, the question of clerical education and the blossoming of the Anglican Church in the seventeenth century, which "saw the English clergy at the peak of their influence over society and intellectual life". His special knowledge of the history of the northern province provides us with some quaint episodes, like that of the precursor of York Minster who managed to serve both the Protestant Archbishop Holgate and the Catholic Heath and was merely one among others who managed to hold on to their benefices during years that saw Henry VIII's Six Articles, the Edwardian prayer book, the Marian reaction and the Elizabethan religious settlement.

career clergymen whose lot contrasted sharply with the unhappy fate of those, whether Papist or Anglican, whose consciences were less accommodating. Archbishop McAdoo links the two foregoing papers to his survey of recent ecumenical progress by a discussion of the correspondence between Archbishop Wake and the French theologian Louis du Pin in the early eighteenth century, and the private talks held by the second Viscount Halifax and the Abbe Portal in 1890. These talks, during which the con-

## The chemistry of the word

Iain McGilchrist

TIMOTHY CORRIGAN

Coleridge, Language, and Criticism  
217pp. Athens: University of Georgia Press (distributed in the UK and on the Continent by Eurospan) \$15.  
0 203 0593 6

There are many curious things about Coleridge's language; and the most fundamental is that the thinking of a writer who said that language merely gave "outness to thought" should itself need so much unravelling from the language in which it finds itself embodied. The knowledge that form and substance are one organic unity never expressed itself in his language, as it did so completely in the language of Wordsworth. If, in Robert Graves's phrase, there is a "cool web of language" that "winds us in", Coleridge's language is often a barbed-wire tangle which seems designed less to wind us in, than to keep us out. "As far as words go", he wrote on one occasion to Humphry Davy, "I have become a formidable chemist." The message to the scientific community is clear: he too could do something impressive, something difficult, though not almost magical in the power it conferred. He was a formidable chemist of words.

All those interested in Coleridge's philosophy owe an enormous debt to Owen Barfield's great work of explanation, *What Coleridge Thought*. Barfield takes heroic pains to make comprehensible what Coleridge had good reasons for leaving obscure. Coleridge was exploring the application of certain ideas - multifarious in unity, the fusion of opposites, the relation between connection and distinction - to both physical and psychological phenomena. These ideas are often labelled "mystical", not because they do not apply to the material world, but because scientists, during a narrow historical period, chose to work under which such ideas were formally incomprehensible. But Coleridge, one suspects, did not want them to be comprehensible: "mystic" or not, he was inclined to be a mystifier. When he returned from giving a lecture to the Royal Society of Literature, ostensibly on the *Prometheus* of Aeschylus (Coleridge had characteristically chosen the most problematic work in the history of Western literature), he wrote to John Taylor Coleridge that he "inflicted the whole Essay (an hour and 25m) on the ears of the R.L.S., with most successful sympathy with the audience, who could not possibly understand the 10th part". Take this in conjunction with the extraordinary episode in the *Biographia Literaria* where Coleridge interrupts himself, practically in mid-sentence, with a letter from "a friend", advising him not to continue with an exposition which his readers would similarly have no

hope of understanding, and one may surmise that the feelings to which Coleridge refers were not those of remorse, but those of guilt. There is a large discrepancy between Coleridge's intellectual power and his capacity for self-expression, which it is hard to believe is entirely voluntary. The purpose of Timothy Corrigan's book, *Coleridge, Language, and Criticism*, is to show that Coleridge brought the languages of many disciplines - principally theology and the natural sciences - to bear on his criticism of literature, and that the languages were in some senses more fundamental than his experience of the world, creating the meanings which Coleridge found in them. The problem here is that the first part of this proposition is indubitable but unconvincing, whereas the second is provocative but, I think, improbable.

The focal point - perhaps the origin - of Corrigan's reflections is the use which Coleridge makes of scientific language, and his chapter on this subject touches on some interesting questions. The discussion avoids being specific, which means that the reader is never quite sure which particular words or phrases the author has in mind, or how exactly he sees them as influencing Coleridge's attitudes to literature. In particular Corrigan fails to note that there are two distinct ways in which Coleridge uses scientific technical terms from empirical science for use as images of less tangible literary and philosophical phenomena. In the passages which Corrigan cites there are several good examples of this practice: "mordant", for example, the term for a substance which causes a dye to bind efficiently to its material substrate, which Coleridge applies to the relation between poetry and metre; or "intussusception", the subsuming of one organic substance into another. Corrigan leaves the meaning of these terms, and their usefulness to Coleridge, unexplained; nor does he suggest how such a use of scientific terms fits into his own scheme. Coleridge's science was the 'substantiation of poetry, as poetry was the etherealizing of science, their complementary nature a consequence of their treating the same reality. As a result neither could be said to have precedence in shaping it. The scientific term here is merely local vehicle, with a specific, limited meaning, serving as a useful image of a poetic or philosophical process. It cannot be said to shape Coleridge's understanding.

Coleridge also used scientific terms of a quite different kind, terms such as "polarity" or "magnetism". Again Corrigan is not specific, but it appears to be terms of this kind which underlie his thesis. Yet it is far from clear that they work in the way that Corrigan suggests. The meanings which Coleridge attached to such terms were personal; they were part of a cohesive philosophy which he derived from the study of Shakespeare, and from his own observations, more than from the writings of Davy and the empirical

person of Elia, he delivered himself to the reading public as a tipsy, whimsical bookman rambling on about old and recherché authors.

Claude A. France's *Companion to Charles Lamb: A Guide to People and Places 1760-1847*, 322pp. Mansell. £18.95.  
0 7201 1657 0

Like Dickens, Charles Lamb has often been taken to represent a certain kind of conviviality. Since the turn of the century there has been a Dickens Fellowship concerned with bonhomie less than with literature. A Charles Lamb Society, aimed in part at promoting good humour, was not formed until 1935, but Lamb had a thriving unofficial fan club long before this. Charles Lamb dinners and get-togethers stretch back into the last century. His circle, and his evening parties, had quickly become a commonplace of literary anecdote; while in his writings, adopting the

scientists. His conceptions are largely compatible with our own understanding of electromagnetic phenomena; but this has no bearing on the questions whether they are compatible with, and in particular whether they are taken over from, the views of Coleridge's contemporaries. When Coleridge wrote, in 1817, that "in all pure phenomena we behold only the copula, the balance or indifference of opposite energies", one could see him as intuiting something that was to be implied in work published by Paraday in 1839 - that is, five years after his own death. But to suggest that Coleridge's attitudes to literature were determined by the language pregnant with the scientific orthodoxies of the age (whatever one decides them to be) does not appear to square with the facts, nor to be borne out by our own experience of Coleridge as a critic.

One has only to think of the immediacy of Coleridge's perception of the organic in literature, by contrast with his general philosophical pronouncements on the subject, to see that this is so. Shakespeare, for example, he described as a "comparative anatomist", working "from within by evolution and assimilation", where as Beaumont and Fletcher "look from the ear and eye, unchecked by any intuition of an inward possibility, just as a man might fit together a quarter of an orange, a quarter of an apple, and the like of lemon and of a pomegranate, and make it look like one round diverse coloured fruit". As with Goethe, whose theory of the genesis and evolution of plant life developed from speculation about the nature of art, Coleridge's anti-mechanistic philosophy, in which mutuality replaces linear causation, follows from his understanding of literature. One could even say that the germ of his electrical theory of matter lay in the plays of Shakespeare.

Coleridge's concept of polarity, far from being a given of contemporary science, was used by him to build a bulwark against what he considered to be its more insidious precepts. Against, for example, Dalton's atomic theory, he recognized the formidable power of his opponents, and this led to something with which we have become familiar: the clothing of the arts in the habits of science. Thus his elaborate terminology, with its air of technical expertise, the endless ethereal distinctions and displacements, are a sort of parody (whether conscious or unconscious) of the scientific process; while his message is, in reality, revolutionary, going far beyond the imaginings of the servants of the age. Corrigan pays lip-service to these critics for whom it is an orthodoxy that language determines the possibilities of experience. For themselves it may be true; all the more need to be careful about the language they espouse. Coleridge's game is a dangerous one to play if one does not have the cunning of Coleridge himself.

We are not, however, given the key illustration of his powers of recall - his memorizing in Paris, and subsequent pirating in London, of *Figaro*. Another entry refers cryptically to Lamb's *faux pas* about Gilbert Wakefield. Cross-check to Gilbert Wakefield. Nothing. Disturbance and hard drinking do not feature significantly in the book, yet they were not trivial features of Lamb's life, and perhaps they should have had their own entries. His sister Mary, whose guardianship he became committed to, and even if it were not known that Lamb himself had been briefly institutionalized, his writing on Jacobean drama alone would imply personal knowledge of the violent and irrational. His humdrum clerical job at East India House was, perhaps, a remedy for hysteria. At all events, the jocose, farside Lamb, so far as he existed, must be set against the Gothic mode. This Lamb, the sufferer, who was strange, and in some degree spiteful, may not sound like an attractive companion. Not surprisingly Lamb's hagiographers ignore him.

The real trouble with the *Guide* is that it is not informed by any critical principle. A type Lamb reader who wanted to identify the central texts by date and about Lamb would meet with rapid defeat. The bibliography veers towards the indiscriminate, most items being equally weighted. For example, the entry for P. P. Howe, the Hazlitt scholar and biographer, cites a *TLS* contribution of 1935 entitled "Lamb and Hazlitt". No indication is given that this is a short letter hardly worth turning up. We are told that Thomas Holcroft had a phenomenal memory.

## Border bogies

Pat Rogers

DOUGLAS S. MACK (Editor)

James Hogg: Selected Stories and Sketches  
211pp. Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press. £8.50.  
0 7073 0322 2

The epigraph which Burns found in Gavin Douglas for "Tam O'Shanter" would have fitted this collection perfectly - "Of Brownies and of Bogliss full is this Buke". It contains thirteen stories which James Hogg contributed to magazines between 1819 and 1831. The earlier items appeared in *Blackwood's*, and several of the stories were reprinted in volume form as *The Shepherd's Calendar*. Some of the later tales were rejected by *Blackwood*, on grounds of taste or more likely of religious orthodoxy. These came out instead in the newly founded *Fraser's Magazine*. The later stories are on the whole stronger, with a more laconic style and less playing to the Border Minstrel's gallery. Folk memory is still drawn on, but without the flood of total recall which impedes the progress of the *Blackwood's* group.

It was Hogg who, appropriately, shepherded Wordsworth around the environs of Ettrick and to revisit this way these days one has need of an equally qualified guide. Douglas Mack, in 1970 Mack edited Hogg's selected poems, with a good selection from the influential *Queen's Wake*. Since then he has produced two more important texts, *The Brownie of Bodsbeck* and the memoirs of Hogg's own life which were later supplemented by some controversial *Familiar Anecdotes* of Walter Scott. In middle life Hogg had experienced considerable financial difficulty, and he drifts sadly in and out of Scott's *Journal* ("Poor James Hogg is sinking under the times" fellow feeling if it existed). The *Journal* is a luridly detailed account of the full range of Hogg's life, and though these stories will not alter that situation, they have their own (faintly repellent) interest.

The common thread is a fascination with guilt, feuds, revenge, private obsession. Almost every story contains a violent and mysterious death: mangled corpses discovered by the roadside, with the countenance frozen in an aspect of terror. Revenants stalk back into the narrative, as if they were called to life again by the scent of Hogg's ink. *Doppelgänger* double up in one tale or *Nithdale*, except in the *Annals* or *Storms* (recalling the tales. The scene is always Ettrick valley), there is surprisingly little sense of the landscape itself. Hogg invented a series of classes into which he divided the *Shepherd's Calendar*. It is a scheme, as replete with potential for anomaly and overlap as the taxonomy which Wordsworth devised for his own

Douglas Mack supplies a useful glossary together with full details of publishing history and textual variants. His notes are a little sparing on points needing elucidation: archaic usages such as "particular" for peculiar or odd, for example. The editor assumes, perhaps realistically, an audience not requiring too much help with historical references. But this is taken too far when Hogg remarks, "he quoted Adam Smith, Ricardo, and even sometimes went as high as Dr Coventry". Not even in Edinburgh, not even among members of the Association for Scottish Literary Studies (who sponsor this volume), may everyone instantly pick up the reference to the agronomist Andrew Coventry. The editor could have spared me, and other readers, the bother of looking it up.

One of the disappointed visitors to the Border county was Washington Irving, who found the Tweed "a naked stream" and the surrounding landscape a mere succession of gray, monotonous hills. He thought it had taken special genius on the part of Scott, above all, to tell the romance of the region. But "Rip Van Winkle" belongs to the identical literary moment of these stories by Hogg, and in the description of Ichabod Crane - "No tale was too gross or monstrous for his capacious swallow" - we see the ideal reader for the tales. They are subtle variations on an age-old pagan theme.

poems - here we have "Deaths, Judgments, and Providences", along with "Dreams and Apparitions" and "Fairies, Brownies and Witches". But almost any story would fit into any category.

Hogg insists, a shade laboriously, that his "legends have been founded on facts, or are of themselves traditional tales that seem originally to have been founded on facts". His embarrassment as to the propriety of including "the antiquated and visionary tales of my friends, the Fairies and Brownies, among them" seems to be born of religious rather than artistic scruples. There are remnants of the world of the Covenanters throughout the tales, but Hogg only once or twice allows his sympathies to show through. This is most marked in the final story, "On the Separate Existence of the Soul", involving the two-way transmigration of souls. Here Hogg makes plain his dislike of the improving landlords who were driving out the small men and erecting "granaries, barns, and thrashing-mills. Marshes were to drain, hedges to raise . . . and a hundred grand new plans of aggrandisement all going on at once." This is perhaps the Hogg disillusioned by his failure to gain acceptance by the progressive Edinburgh intellectuals.

Much of the writing takes the form of a casual anecdotalism, and a harsh comedy surfaces on many occasions: A grand and important change at that moment awaited him, and shortly after was that change effected; for that night did Robin Robson the shepherd die, and his soul departed from him. The reader, an instant ago was not expecting this; but neither did Robin Robson expect it the evening before, nor his wife, nor his daughter Ally; yet it so fell out, and a very painful circumstance it was to the survivors, not to mention the sufferer, who was the most hardy bested of them all. . . . It was merely for want of breath that Robin was forced to die.

Though the language has salt and savour, "gaberlunze", "grim" and "gurdy", Hogg seldom achieves the full comic richness which he aims for - "Wandering Willie's Tale" from *Radgaster* is a model for the later items. When the note is struck, it is unmistakable: "I think unky's unco parabolical the day," said Tibby to her grandmother; "what makes her that gate?" Elsewhere the technique is less assured: a tale called "Sound Morality" opens with a dialogue between two shepherds, one anguished, the other broad Scotch. But the latter's subsequent failure in the most general sense, and only at the end does Hogg restore him to his dialect.

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## Font fodder

Perry Butler

PETER J. JAGGER

Clouded Witness: Initiation in the Church of England in the Mid-Victorian Period 1850-1875  
223pp. Allison Park, PA: Pickwick (distributed in the UK by T. and T. Clark, Edinburgh). £10.50.  
0 915138 51 4

Christian Initiation is a matter of much contemporary concern in the Church of England. Admission to communion before confirmation and the role of godparents are matters of debate in the General Synod. In the parishes the clergy are increasingly divided between those favouring an "open" church, where baptism is seen as a sacrament of grace, and those who see it as a rite of initiation, marking the beginning of a new life in Christ. Jagger shows that many of the unresolved theological, liturgical, pastoral and social problems relating to initiation today are, in fact, legacies from the mid-Victorian period.

Taking as his starting-point the most famous baptismal controversy of the nineteenth century, the Othello Judgment of 1850, which sent Henry later Cardinal Manning to Rome and made Mr Gladstone exclaim that the Church of England was lost unless it repudiated it, Jagger surveys, in a number of short sections, various matters concerning baptism and confirmation in the period up to 1875. Many of the problems seem to have stemmed from the changing position of the Church of England within society indicated by the Religious Census of 1851, which showed clearly that Church and Nation were no longer coterminous, as well as from "party

conflict within the Established Church over the theological issues involved.

Jagger has read extensively in the official records of the Church, ecclesiastical journals and newspapers, biographies and especially in the vast pamphlet literature relating to the subject. Although the book forms part of a new series of Pittsburgh Theological Monographs his focus is not narrowly theological, and he explores both the pastoral environment and the social context.

In examining the "folk religion" dimension of these rites of passage it is interesting to read what Jagger has to say alongside James Obelkevich's fascinating study *Religion and Rural Society: South Lindsey 1825-1875* (1976). With confirmation now taking place within the context of the eucharist, it is apt to forget that many of those confirmed never became communicants. Jagger also points out the effect of the Registration Act of 1837, which he believes was one of the greatest single factors in causing a considerable decline in the number of children baptised at Church of England fonts. He also highlights the problem many, especially working-class people, found in obtaining the proper number of sponsors required by Canon XXIX, and the debate surrounding its revision which proved abortive.

Interesting comments are also made about the actual administration of the rites. Touching the head of a child with a wet finger or sprinkling with a brush those arranged around the communion table were irregularities which seem not to have been limited only to a small minority; Manning was not the only ex-Anglican who felt such carelessness called into question the validity of baptism in the Church of England.

Modern clerics scandalized by the christening of Prince William in the Music Room of Buckingham Palace will be intrigued to learn that although Queen Victoria saw nothing wrong in having the heir to the throne baptized in private, objections to such a suggestion were raised by both Archbishop Howley and Peel, who felt that the interests of religion and propriety required baptism in a church.

In his discussion of the theological controversy within the Church and the conflict between high, low and broad, Jagger is, perhaps, too schematic. Differences of view found within evangelical ranks deserve clearer exposition and some High Churchmen in this period were anxious to dissociate themselves from Tractarian novelties. This can make labelling perilous. Frederick Meyrick, for instance, described here as an ardent, unorthodox High Churchman.

Jagger might also have given rather more attention to the baptismal controversies earlier in the century. Richard Mant's *Appeal to the Gospel* in 1812 opened wounds which festered into the 1820s and 1830s with a trickle of secessions into dissent which might have become a small flood had theological definition been forced upon the Church before mid-century.

But these are small quibbles. As Geoffrey Cuming, the doyen of Anglican liturgical historians, writes in a foreword, "Mr Jagger has chosen an unlit field". The scope of the book is inevitably limited. The author has already placed us in his debt by editing two collections of baptismal liturgy. It is to be hoped that this present work will stimulate others to explore the overlap between liturgical history, social history and historical theology.